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Nature, The Mirror of Grace

STUDIES OF SEVEN PARABLES

By

ROBERT ELLIS THOMPSON, S. T. D.

"Know ye not this parable? and how shall ye know all the parables?"
Mark iv: 13.

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CONTENTS

CHAPTER		PAGE
I.	LIGHT	3
II.	LIFE	19
III.	SHEEP	41
IV.	FOOD	53
V.	TOUCH	69
VI.	SOWING AND REAPING	85
VII.	UPWARD	111

PREFACE

THE language used by our Lord with regard to his own teaching by parable implies that there is a correspondence between the facts of nature and those of grace, which his people are to find a profit in studying. Such a correspondence is assumed throughout the Scriptures of both Testaments. It is implied in the terms by which spiritual truths are expressed, as these are derived from natural objects and transferred to the truths of the kingdom of God.

We generally speak of the parables as meaning those which our Lord employed in the Gospels. He uses this method of teaching more directly and frequently than is done in any other part of the Bible, but not with the assumption that he is exhausting the analogies with which he is dealing. Mark tells us that when the disciples were puzzled by the parable of the Sower, and asked its meaning, he said to them: "Unto you is given the mystery of the kingdom of God: but unto them that are without, all things are done in parables . . . Know ye not this parable? and how shall ye know all the parables?" This seems to say that it is the mark of his people not to rest in

the natural sense of natural facts, as do those who are without, but to see beyond them to spiritual truth. He reads us a few pages of the great book, and puts it into our hands that we may read the rest.

His people indeed have been reading in this book ever since, and many of the church's best teachers have busied themselves with it. Origen and Augustine in the patristic age; Anselm and Hugo of St. Victor in the Middle Ages; Luther, Heinrich Müller and Christian Scriver, among the older German writers; John Spencer and Thomas Fuller, in England; Hugh Macmillan, George Macdonald and Mrs. Alfred Gatty, in our own time, have rendered good service as interpreters of the parables. These are names which occur to me, but there are many others who have laid us under obligations.

The parables I have tried to interpret more fully are all of them suggested in the Scriptures. They run through the whole texture of the Bible, appearing more fully in some parts than in others. They are but a few out of a great number which are found in the good book.

Several of them have appeared in brief in contributions to The Sunday School Times, but they are here much fuller and more complete.

Philadelphia, 1906.

I

LIGHT

NATURE, THE MIRROR OF GRACE

CHAPTER I

LIGHT

"I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." These words, with which Thomas à Kempis begins his "Imitation of Christ," refer to the moment in the Feast of Tabernacles at which the two great candelabra, unused at other times, were lighted up in the court of the temple, so that the light they gave shone over the whole city. Our Lord takes them as a symbol of his own position as the giver of spiritual light to mankind. He says in effect: "I am the light, not of your city only, or of your nation alone, but of the whole earth. He that followeth me, in whatever corner of the world, shall he not stumble as one that walks in the darkness. He shall have the light he needs to live by—the light that gives life."

The parable is not a new one. Light as a

symbol of a spiritual blessing is recognized in all the religions of the world, especially that of Persia. In the Old Testament, notably in Job, Isaiah, and the Psalms, light is thus used. It is more spoken of in the Gospel of John than in any other part of the New Testament, and with one exception (v. 35), always as connected with the personality of our Lord and his influence upon men. Both the evangelist and our Lord himself find in light the natural fact which most resembles that divine activity, by which he was working upon his own people and upon the world at large.

It was as a symbol of this divine influence that light itself was created. It was the firstborn of creation, for God said, "Let there be light!" before he called order out of chaos. It was even then the visible symbol of that divine word of God, by whom "the world was framed," of him without whom "was not anything made that hath been made." The Fourth Gospel, with that Genesis narrative kept in mind throughout, describes our Lord as the spiritual sun, sustaining a relation to the spirits of men as universal as that of the natural sun to the physical life of our planet—as "the true light, even the light which lighteth every man, coming into the world," although too often shining in the darkness and not apprehended.

Natural light is a many-sided fact, and it is

worth while to study its functions to see what help they give us to understand the workings of that divine light which it symbolizes.

1. The nature of the natural light was a mystery to those who first investigated it. They supposed it to be a very subtle substance, poured into our planet from the sun; but this we know to be impossible. The most refined material substance, if hurled upon our planet at the rate light moves—ninety-five million miles in eight minutes—would destroy it utterly. This more material conception has been replaced by the view that light is a subtle force, transmitted in waves of an all-pervading ether, and reaching every part of the universe, from the great centers of light and heat we call suns.

Our Lord's association of light with life corresponds to the natural fact. It gives force and vitality to vegetable existence, and health and joy to animal existence. It circulates in every vein and tingles in every nerve of the animal world. Take it away, and the plant dies; the animal wilts. So the nature of both plant and animal craves the light. There are, indeed, fish in the Mammoth Cave of Kentucky, which never have had a ray of light fall upon them, and their eyes have all but disappeared, having been "atrophied through disuse." But they are a poor kind of fish,

degenerate descendants of those which lived in the light of day. Those of us who have tried to live and work in rooms, whose windows open only to the north, find how needful the direct light of the sun is to physical health.

The vegetable world illustrates this craving of life for light in very striking ways. I once went into a darkened cellar, which the light penetrated at but one small window, darkened by cobwebs. At the other end of that cellar lay a few potatoes, which had budded and sent out long runners, some twenty feet in length and ghastly white, toward that distant window. It was as pathetic a sight as the vegetable world could furnish, and a parable too palpable for anyone to miss.

The spiritual Light of the world is the subtlest and most pervasive of the forces which act upon humanity. Like the light of day, he moves through men's lives silently, swiftly, with no blare of trumpets or prancing of processions, but as gently as the dew falls upon the grass, or the sunlight shines into the opening flowers. He does not cry aloud in the world's market places, nor is he heralded in its newspapers; but he passes to and fro, in ceaseless and unmeasured energy among the hearts of men. His knock at the door is as quiet as the sunshine which awakens them

every day from sleep; but if any man open unto him, there he dwells in lasting and life-giving influence, making his home.

Our natures were made for this Light, and they crave it as pathetically as those potatoes craved for the light of day. As Tertullian says, "The soul is naturally Christian," for we were made for him, and can have no lasting satisfaction apart from him. But we are not bound to him by the compulsion of natural law, for we have the fatal power to choke and deny our craving for him. "They will not come unto me that they may have light," he himself said of his own countrymen. He can be no more to us than we choose to have him be. He knocks at the door, but it is ours to open. If we refuse to open it, we are shutting out the health of our spirits; for the holiness he brings is the health of the heart. It is walking in the light, and living the true life in the true way.

II. Light is the parent of color, and color is the natural symbol of joy. We have come to know what color is through the study of light. We now know that nothing has color in itself, but only through the fitness of its surface to absorb some of the rays of which light is composed, and to reflect the rest. "All cats are black in the dark," it has been said. So are all flowers; so are all people. It is only under the light that differences

in color exist. What would have been a dull, colorless, and cheerless world, is arrayed by light in all the colors of the spectrum.

So in the human world, joy is the child of the light. Counterfeits of joy there may be without it—amusements, diversions, pastimes, and distractions. But, as each of these words confesses by its first and strict sense, these are but devices to kill time, and to keep us from thinking with the gravity and sincerity which befit human beings. It is impossible that they should fill our hearts or satisfy our inborn craving for joy. We are so made that the whole world, apart from God, is not enough for us. That is our glory and our pain. That is the hunger which devoured the heart of the prodigal in the far-off land of riot and waste.

God means joy for us. He does not mean us to accept what George Macdonald calls "the gray look of life" as the true one. It is not for a colorless and cheerless existence, even of duty, that he has made us, but for gladness and happiness. So his Son is the joy-bringer. He established a kingdom, which is not only "righteousness and peace," but "joy in the Holy Ghost." The truth of this is seen in the lives of the first Christians, who had very little of what the world calls wealth, who stood daily in peril of their lives; who were

despised by their fellow-men as little better than mad. There is no body of literature in the world that is pervaded by such an uplift of a great joy as is the New Testament. They abounded in joy, and even "took joyfully the spoiling of their goods."

III. Photography shows that there are rays of color in the spectrum both above and below those which our eyes can distinguish. In some, the vibration of the waves of the ether is too rapid for our eyes to follow; in others too slow. If our eyes had a wider range, we should discover in the natural world a wealth of color, as real as our reds, blues, and greens, in addition to that which we now see. When we get better eyes than we now have, we will see them.

So in the spiritual world, we are told, there are heights and depths of joy of which we in this life can know nothing. We cannot even imagine them, the apostle says after having had a glimpse of them (I Cor. ii:9). But as the color we see suggests and makes credible to us the color which is beyond our seeing, so the joy we already have makes it possible for us to believe in a gladness and a delight beyond our experience, and we come to look for a rapture of peace and contentment better than earth has at its best. "Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord," are the words which

welcome faithful servants into the life beyond death. What that joy is we are able to guess from the language of our Lord, when he speaks of "joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth." It is the joy of lifting up the fallen, comforting the sorrowful, welcoming the lost—the rapture which lights up heaven with a fresh gladness to its uttermost bounds, when the Father welcomes back a lost son. In that great fellowship of joy and service, the boundless yearnings, and the unsatisfied capacities of our human nature, will find their fit satisfaction—

> "New senses, new rewards of sense,
> The spectrum filled, all dark lines bright."

IV. It is through light that we learn the real magnitude of all things in our natural life. We are dependent upon sight for our sense of size and distance. The baby grasps at the plaything either too far or too near to catch it, until he learns to measure distances by focusing his eyes. If we waken in a dark room and try to find the door, especially if the room and its contents be not familiar to us, we seem to go miles in search of it. It is through light that we perceive the bulk of things.

It is in the Light which Jesus Christ is and imparts that we learn the true magnitudes of life,

and discover the smallness of the small and the greatness of the great. Very much of our Lord's own teaching is directed to this difference. He labors to bring his hearers to discern what is great enough to be worthy of their attention, and what is small enough to be a negligible quantity. This, for instance, is his leading purpose in the parables of the precious pearl, and of the treasure hid in the field. He applauds the business man's sense of what is best worth having, and his acting promptly and without reserve on ascertained values. On the other hand, he warns us all against the mistake of assuming that the best worth our having is what the world counts as such, and rebukes men for taking the measures of the market place for those which really test success in life. Not the honor of men, but the approval of God; not the meat and clothing which cherish material life, but life itself, which is more than a living; not the "much goods laid up in store," but the riches a man can carry beyond death, he insists are worthy of our aroused attention. "True religion," says Jonathan Edwards, "is nothing but to know small things to be small, and great things to be great, and to act on that knowledge."

V. The natural light not only moves on straight lines, but is reflected and refracted into

spaces it would not reach directly. If it were not, there would be entire darkness wherever the rays of the sun did not fall. The electric light has very little power of refraction, so the shadows it casts are very deep, and it is necessary to clear away the branches of the trees on streets lighted by it, where these come in its way. The sunlight shines around corners and into rooms whose windows face only to the north, though not so clearly or healthily, as I found from using a room of that aspect for a library.

The spiritual rays of the Light of the world are reflected and refracted in much the same way, to the spirits of those who turn their mental windows away from him, but who are living in a Christian community, where his presence and his influences are welcomed by others. It is sometimes objected that the Christian virtues cannot be dependent upon faith in our Lord, since such people as John Stuart Mill and Francis Power Cobbe exemplified many of those virtues while rejecting his claim to be the Light of the world. Let us not forget that they lived in a society pervaded by the influences of the Christian gospel, and in intimate relations with those who cherish those lofty ideals of character which are realized in the person of our Lord. It would have been otherwise if they had lived in a community which shared their

denials;* and they would have been better and happier if they had lived "by faith upon the Son of God." They lost much and gained nothing by having the windows of the mind turned to the cold north of unbelief, and by being dependent upon others to reflect to them that which they should have received directly from the Son of man.

VI. In the natural world, as we see it on the surface of our planet, light and darkness appear to balance each other. We get more light in summer, and more darkness in winter, but taking the round year they seem to be equal. But this is a delusion, due to our being badly placed for a true observation of the matter. On the earth's

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* "When the microscopic search of skepticism, which has hunted the heavens and sounded the seas to disprove the existence of a Creator, has turned its attention to human society, and has found a place on this planet ten miles square where a decent man can live in decency, comfort, and security, supporting and educating his children unspoiled and unpolluted; a place where age is reverenced, infancy protected, manhood respected, womanhood honored, and human life held in due regard—when skeptics can find such a place ten miles square on this globe, where the gospel of Christ has not gone and cleared the way, and laid the foundations and made decency and security possible, it will be in order for the skeptical literati to move thither and then ventilate their views."—*James Russell Lowell.*

surface the darkness seems to equal the light, and yet it is but the shadow of our planet, which diminishes and dwindles as it passes out from the sun until it vanishes, and the light passes beyond it to meet the light of other suns. Jakob Boehme says that the planets, as God made them at the first, cast no shadow, and darkness was not. The shadow, he says, came with sin, and is part of the anguish from which creation is to be redeemed.

We are equally liable to be misled in our judgment of the relative extent of spiritual light and darkness. In our less hopeful moods we are disposed to think that moral evil exceeds goodness in our world's life, and sin is more abundant than the grace which is fighting against it. We even incline to think it always must be so in this world of ours. Here also we need to be lifted above our common level, to get the right position for a judgment. That position is by the riven tomb of the risen Saviour. His rising again from the dead is the symbol, and more than the symbol, of his triumph over the powers of spiritual darkness. It is the proclamation that life is mightier than death, good than evil, grace than sin. It is the earnest and the prophecy of the final and substantial victory of the kingdom of light over all antagonistic influences. Without it, hope would have to be

struck from the list of the Christian virtues, as having no basis in truth and reality, and as being but a make-believe.

In our age, Christian hope has arrayed against it the pessimism which is almost the intellectual atmosphere of the time, and which seduces us into an unchristian estimate of the worth of human life and its outlook on the future. It proclaims that man is a contemptible creature, governed only by the lowest motives, and perennially capable of lawless crime, as well as of selfish cowardice. It echoes Satan's estimate of us, "All that a man hath he will give for his life"—a lie which is contradicted on every page of human history. To escape this insidious anti-gospel, we must remember how poorly placed we are for a true estimate of the spiritual facts, and how much more readily we come into knowledge of the evil in life than of its good. We must have faith, in spite of any appearances to the contrary, that the good cause is forever advancing, that grace is always gaining ground upon sin and will "yet more abound," and that the light is vaster and mightier than the darkness. For that is involved in our faith in our Lord and Master, the Light of the world, the conquering King, who is subjecting all things to himself.

II

LIFE

CHAPTER II

LIFE

The things which we are most familiar with and which lie the nearest to us, are generally those we find the hardest to define; that is, to state the class they belong to, and how they differ from other things of that class. What, for instance, is life? We look to science for an answer, and we get no better than a relative definition. We are told that life is sensitiveness to environment. The dead body has lost that sensitiveness. The sun shines on it without heating it. The cold wind blows upon it without adding to its chill. No strange sound avails to awaken it to attention. It is irresponsive to all that is round it; and this is death, as its power to respond was life.

Although the definition is superficial, it is not worthless. It answers, after a fashion, to some of the uses of the word in the Scriptures, where life is spoken of relatively. We are made "alive unto God in Jesus Christ," when the Son makes the Father more real to us, so that this greatest of all the facts in our environment enters into our experience, and ceases to be a notion of the mind.

Natural life having so much that is mysterious about it, we may expect spiritual life to be a mystery. But the one mystery casts light upon the other, especially through their resemblances.

I. Prof. Drummond emphasizes the fact that life is derivable only from life. The spontaneous generation of a living being from dead matter is unknown to science, although some have believed it possible, and a very few have claimed that they witnessed it. In all such cases we have reason to believe that the difficult task of eliminating living germs from the substances in which the experiment was made was not complete. In the latest of them, the evidences that life resulted are too faint and feeble for even a materialist to pin his faith to, however anxious he might be to believe this. That this spontaneous and natural transition from dead matter to the living organism, without the intervention of any living agency, creative or generative, is necessary to complete the materialist theory of the world as it stands, is warrant enough for us to exact the most decisive proofs from those who tell us they have observed such a transition.*

* Professor Tyndall, in his Belfast Address (1874), declared that matter possessed the promise and the potency of all forms of existence. But he rejected every alleged instance of spontaneous generation of life, as do almost all the thinkers of his school. Haeckel is the notable exception.

The transition from the dead to the living, from the inorganic to the organic world, cannot be traced to any operation of dead forces. It must have had its commencement in a creative act, which made a new beginning. The existence of life in even its humblest forms implies a living Creator, shaping his works in an increasing likeness to himself. Life is a perpetual challenge to the materialist, for the forces his theory recognizes and implies would have left the world with no higher organization than the rock crystal.

A still more direct challenge is found in the presence of moral life in the human species, with its sense of right and wrong, of duty and of sin. As Professor Huxley said in his "Romanes Lecture on Evolution and Ethics" (1893), nature knows nothing of right and wrong, and has no place for ethical distinctions. Their origin must be sought elsewhere. That they are real, implies the activity of a creative will, which has raised our race to an honor above the beasts, and has clothed us with a dignity and a responsibility which are supernatural. In making this concession, the author of "Man's Place in Nature" (1863), admitted that man has a place above nature, of which natural science can give us no account.

II. This is as true of the restoration of life as

of its inception. That the race of men came down from the first level of their created dignity by a fall or apostasy, which has implanted what Kant calls "a radical evil in human nature," is the teaching both of the Bible and of manifold Gentile traditions. It is peculiar to the Bible that it shows that God did not consent that this fall should be the law of human life, but undertook to retrieve it by renewing the spiritual life of mankind. Here again there was a new beginning, through the birth of a divine life into the world in the incarnation of the Son of God. Our divine Lord is a new vital force added to the spiritual resources of the world. We cannot resolve this force into any felicitous combination of elements already existing in human history. Skeptical historians and critics have attempted again and again to show that nothing radically different from the previous course of affairs took place in Palestine at the beginning of the Christian Era, that Jesus was a happy blending of Hebraic and Hellenic elements into a novel combination, that the facts as to his life and his acts have been obscured by wondering disciples, and so forth. After all these efforts, he stands out against the background of the world's history as a unique and original spiritual fact, a "new thing" which was added to the spiritual forces of the world at the opening of that

era from which the greatest peoples count their years. If the whole New Testament were annihilated, or had never been written, the reach and the scope of the influence he exerted upon men of his own age and of every age since his ascension, would present to the unbelieving critic just the same puzzle as they now have to solve. It is through the existence of the apostolic records that we and they are furnished with the only key to that puzzle. They tell us that the new life that dawned upon the world came from the life of the Son of God, who came that we "may have life, and may have it abundantly."

Parallel with the redemption of the race is the regeneration of the individual. The deadness and insensitiveness to spiritual facts which sin has produced in us not only has no remedy in nature, but is itself of the nature of a "law of sin and death," by which we are sunk farther and farther in evil through the evil already admitted into our wills. It is a law of reaping as we have sowed, by which ever-increasing harvests of wrong are gathered in our experience. Science, philosophy, and the world offer us no remedy for this. They speak only of the certainty that every cause will work on to its natural effects, and every reaping must be after the fashion of the sowing. They may bring us alleviations, but no cure. Apart

from the gospel of Jesus Christ there is not the smallest reason for us to expect that any bad man will ever become a good one, or that the canker of sin will ever cease to gnaw into the life it has once attacked. Nothing less than the impartation of a new life will suffice to stop the processes of spiritual destruction already begun in us, and to make us so alive unto God that we shall live in holy obedience to his laws, and in the enjoyment of his peace. For the individual man as for the race, it is life from life.

III. Life is the great unifier. It builds up its organisms by gathering into one the lifeless particles of inorganic matter, and shaping these into tissues and organs which no skill of human manipulation can reproduce. Whether in vegetable or animal form, it effects combinations which cannot be repeated by the most skillful mechanisms or chemical manipulations. We recognize its products as standing apart from all that are not the result of the play of vital force, and as constituting unities of a higher order than either physics or chemistry can furnish.

Henry Brooke, in his curious book, "The Fool of Quality" (1760-1777), has an admirable statement of this truth:—

"Every particle of matter has a self, or distinct

entity, inasmuch as it cannot be any other particle of matter. Now while it continues in this state of selfishness, or absolute distinction, it is utterly useless and insignificant, and is to the universe as though it were not. But when the divine Intelligence hath harmonized certain qualities of such distinct particles into certain animal or vegetable systems, each yields up its powers for the benefit of the whole, and then and then only becomes capable and productive of shape, coloring, beauty—flowers, fragrance, and fruits. This operation in matter is no other than a manifestation of a like process in mind; and no soul ever was capable of any degree of virtue or happiness save so far as it was drawn away in its affections from self; save so far as it is engaged in wishing, contriving, endeavoring, promoting, and rejoicing in the welfare and happiness of others."

So long as man stands aloof in the isolation of a spiritual atom, with his thoughts all centering in himself, under the influence either of his selfish propensities, or his more selfish pharisaic pride, he is spiritually dead. When he is got off his own center, is brought under the influence of a life that lies beyond himself, and finds a center which is not in himself, he comes to life, and through that life is bound to his fellowmen.

Our Lord did not come into the world merely

to save individual sinners from their sins, and to fit them for heaven. He came to set up a kingdom or order of human life under an unseen King, in which men should live in more natural and human relations with each other than ever before. This kingdom finds its highest expression in his church, but it embraces the family and the nation in its scope, as institutions divinely established for the welfare of mankind. It brings to these the "life that working strongly binds" man to man more closely than ever before.

(a) He has made the family a new thing within the sphere of his influence, abolishing polygamy, lifting the wife to her rightful place of honor, purifying the affections and refining the manners of all Christian households. He has turned the hearts of the fathers to the children and of the children to the fathers, emancipating the child from the virtual slavery of the old order and securing him the rights of a human being.

(*b*) His influence upon the life of the Christian state has been less fully recognized, as being less palpable, though not less real. Outside of Christendom there is little sense of the brotherhood which binds a nation in one, so that all the members suffer when one is wronged or prostrated by disaster. Mr. J. Talboys Wheeler, in his "Short History of India" (1880), describing the

apathy with which the natives regarded the horrors of the Black Hole of Calcutta (1756), remarks: "This utter want of political ties among the masses of India is the cause of their depression. Individually, they are the kindest and most compassionate people in the world, but outside their own little circle of family or caste they are utterly heedless of what is going on. Within the last few years there has been a change for the better; the famines have enlarged their sympathies, and the political future of the Hindu people is more hopeful now than at any former period of their history." It has been through two hundred years of contact with Christian ideas that they have changed for the better, and have begun to realize that they have a share in the sufferings of their countrymen.

So the awakening of China to this sense has found expression in a general refusal to have any dealings with our own country, because of the indignities to which their countrymen have been subjected in visiting America. The leaders in this movement are those who have imbibed Christian ideas on the subject through an education in western science and literature, and who have become editors of the popular newspapers of the country. They are bringing the hundreds of millions of Chinamen to feel that they are wronged in

every wrong inflicted upon a countryman of theirs, as they are one body politic.

It is especially in Christian nations that this feeling has the largest scope and finds the fullest expression. Through it a new stage of political development has been reached, in which the whole strength and power of the state is brought to bear in defense of the rights of the humblest citizen. The Christian state has become the organized unselfishness of the whole people for the protection of every member of the body politic. Nor does it stop with the assertion and maintenance of rights. As Mazzini well says, nations do not exist by the maintenance of rights merely, but through heroism, and through self-sacrifice. It is through their citizens being willing to "go the second mile" that they maintain their existence and their authority. Their history is the story of great deeds done for the common weal, where mere rights were not at stake.

(*c*) In what might be called the biological passages of his epistles (Romans xii: 4-9; I Corinthians xii: 12-30; Ephesians iii: 6; iv: 4-16; Colossians i: 17-24; ii: 18, 19; iii: 15), the apostle Paul applies this principle to the church, and illustrates the nature of our fellowship with our Head and with each other from comparison with the human body. It is his favorite form of

declaring that our Lord came to establish a kingdom among men, and he anticipates modern sociologists in the use of this analogy to explain the social unities and functions. "We, who are many, are one body in Christ, and severally members one of another."

IV. Growth is a characteristic of life. Dead things never grow. They may enlarge by the accretion of dead particles, as do the stalactites in a lime cave; but these particles have no organic unity, so that none of them renders any service to the whole, or fills any place which the rest could not. A tree adds to its bulk year by year, by adding each year a fresh layer of woody fiber to its trunk, and by extending its old branches and putting forth new. These additions are parts of its organism, and sharers of its fortunes as an organism. With its decay, they would show a diminished vitality, and with its death they would die. It is only the living tree that goes on adding to its bulk.

So in the spiritual life: its reality is shown by its growth. In a memorable passage of his "Apologia pro Vita Sua" (1864), the late Cardinal Newman says: "The writer to whom (humanly speaking) I owe my soul was Thomas Scott of Aston-Sandford... I used almost as proverbs what I considered the scope and issue of

his doctrine, 'Holiness before peace,' and 'Growth, the only evidence of life.'" The disposition in Thomas Scott's time was to rest the proof of the possession of the Christian life upon a single experience, called "a hopeful work of grace." He justly insisted that this can be no more than the first step in Christian living, and that "growth in grace" is the demand of the gospel, equally with repentance unto life, and personal acquaintance with God. Dr. Trumbull tells of hearing a man say, "All my class is converted now, and I look upon my work as done." It had but begun, for the training of those young Christians all lay before him. So we see now, for we all agree with Thomas Scott, that real life will find its expression in growth.

We all, indeed, are growing inwardly as well as outwardly, but, as Henry Ward Beecher says, it is of great importance to observe what it is that grows most in us. Is it our intimacy with God, or the affairs and pleasures of the world? Is it our vision of what lies on a level with our eyes, or of what lies above that level? Is it the interest in the things that we must leave behind us at death, or in what we can carry into the life beyond death?

V. Along with growth goes continuity. The tree is the same tree year after year, and even

century after century. The big redwood on the slopes of the Sierras carries on its inner layers the brand left by a fire before the days of King Solomon; and it is just the same tree that then spread its branches over the remote ancestors of the bears and coyotes which range those mountains to-day. It is the longest-lived of all the living things known to us, but it has not lost its organic identity through the lapse of millenniums.

So with our bodily life. We do not leave it behind us, whatever the changes it undergoes. It may be that every physical particle which once constituted the body has been eliminated and replaced by another. Yet it retains the same character throughout all changes. We carry to our graves the scars of injuries we received in early infancy. Our hair retains the same hue, our eyes the same color, our faces the same physiognomy, as when we were children. Our photographs taken at different ages show marked resemblances, along with the differences the years have brought us.

So of our inward life: we are still the same selves that we were when we first "found ourselves," as conscious human beings. We lose nothing of our identity with the lapse of years. When I was a small boy, I threw a stone at a robin redbreast, and broke its leg. I was ashamed

of it then; I am ashamed of it now. Although I believe it has been forgiven me by the Maker of the robin, I shall never forget the wanton cruelty of the act. It has kept me from doing anything that would hurt a bird during the years which have elapsed since then. I know it was I who did it; that I was, and am, the small white-headed scamp who picked up that stone and flung it with all his might, and—for once—did not miss the mark. So of many a worse act or neglect in the intervening years: I am the one who did or omitted to do these things, and never can I escape the identity or the responsibility.

"Upon me lies a burden which I cannot shift," says Frederick Maurice, "upon any other human creature—the burden of duties unfulfilled, words unspoken, or spoken violently and untruly; of holy relationships neglected; of days wasted forever; of evil thoughts once cherished, which are ever appearing as fresh as when they were first admitted into the heart; of talents cast away; of affections in myself or in others trifled with; of light within turned to darkness. So speaks the conscience; so speaks or has spoken the conscience of each man."

It is just this unbroken identity which is the most terrible fact of an evil life, as it is the basis

of the remorse which darkens its present, and may forever darken its future, with despair. Memory is terribly faithful in its record of evil things; how faithful has been shown to some at moments of extreme peril, when the whole past, with all its details, has been flashed as in an instant upon their mental vision. It is from such experiences that we come to understand the statement that when the dead stand before God, there will be an opening of the book for each of the human race, and that the dead will be judged out of the things which are written in the books (Revelation xx: 12). Unless there be some cleansing power which can efface the dreadful records kept by the heart, then a future of remorse and misery is all that is possible to every one who has defiled his conscience with sin. "If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanseth us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (I John i: 7-9). Without that cleansing, there is no gospel for men.

There is, however, a joyful side to this truth of the continuity of life—it is that we need leave

nothing behind us that is worth taking along with us. It is, indeed, our duty and our right to lay aside the limitations which cramp each age of life, and yet to carry with us all that belongs to the strength and the insight of that age. The apostle says that when he became a man, he put away what was childish; but he did not lay aside what was childlike in his nature. The true Christian, whatever his years or his experience, never ceases to be a child in all the qualities which bring the child near to the gate of the kingdom. Our Lord told Nicodemus that to be born anew (or from above) is the prerequisite for entering the kingdom (John iii: 3, 5); and he told the apostles that "whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall in no wise enter therein" (Luke xviii: 17). The birth from above renews us into childlikeness, just as we were born into natural childhood by natural birth. And to emphasize the relation, he set a little child in the midst when he set forth the nature of regeneration.

Some people have been puzzled to see how children are saved. The gospel says the difficulty lies in getting grown people to become children for their salvation. To do that, they must lay aside their hard worldly wisdom; their dullness in the sense of right and wrong; their fretting about

to-morrow; their lack of simple dependence upon our Father in heaven; their unreadiness to trust him for the grandest things he promises; their want of any sense of the wonder in the world and in life; their resentful malice toward those who have injured them. Our Lord himself, in his growth into manhood, left nothing behind him that belonged to a perfect child. It would have been better if the revisers had left untouched the passage in which the church speaks to the Father of "thy holy Child Jesus" (Acts iv: 30), for while the Greek word has also the sense of "servant," yet its primary meaning cannot have been far from the thought of the apostle.

Wordsworth, the first modern poet who has opened the book of childhood to us, gives expression to the Christian idea:—

> My heart leaps up when I behold
> A rainbow in the sky:
> So was it when my life began;
> So is it now I am a man;
> So be it when I shall grow old,
> Or let me die!
> And I could wish my days to be
> Bound each to each in natural piety.

VI. Nature, to a superficial view, seems to foretell death as the end of life. The living thing dies and passes away in the dissolution of the

organism into its elements; the dead thing alone remains the same.

Nature, however, abounds in intimations that life may pass through and survive deathlike changes, which open upon another and a nobler existence. One of these is the transformation which insects undergo in passing from the chrysalis stage of their existence to that in which they attain the full growth and freedom. This transformation helped the Greeks at least to believe in a life after death. They gave the name Psyche (soul) to the butterfly, because they saw in its passage from a creeping grub to a flying thing a parable and prophecy of the change death would work upon themselves.

Mrs. Alfred Gatty, in one of her beautiful parables of nature, takes as an instance the larva of the dragon fly, whose life is spent under water until he is overtaken by languor and pain, and is driven to climb the stalk of some water-plant toward the surface. His kindred follow him with pity and sympathy, and think of him as lost and gone, when he emerges from his shell, and changes into a swift and strong master of flight, whose "four gauzy pinions flash back the sunshine." Nor can he return to the state in which he had lived, to explain to his brothers the change he has undergone. They go on mourning

his loss, while the empty shell that had contained him clings to the stem by which he had climbed.

In other cases the larva buries itself in the earth when the period of change approaches, and rises from its grave to the higher existence. Mrs. Trumbull-Slosson makes a beautiful use of this in one of the stories of her "Seven Dreamers."

While there is no simple organism which does not look forward to the change we call death, there are complex organisms, each with a life of its own, whose nature implies immortality. The nation is one of these, and the church is another.

Some theorists have run the parallel so far between the life of the individual man and that of the nation as to predict a time of necessary decay and a final death for every one of them. Nations, however, die only by suicide, through a general selfishness displacing public spirit, and the love of country perishing out of the hearts of the people. History, as Dr. Elisha Mulford, in his great book on "The Nation," says, is not a series of funerals. England has seen a thousand years of national life, and is as full of vitality as at any earlier stage of her existence.

The church also is a deathless organization. She came into existence when Peter, in the name of the Twelve, uttered the great confession; and in that moment our Lord pronounced the grand

promise that the gates of Hades, the power of death, should never prevail against her. At times, she has seemed to fall into a sleep that might have proved deadly; but always she was quickened into a fresh life by the indwelling Spirit, roused to a new sense of the work she had to do for God, and equipped with new instruments to do it, in the persons of prophets and reformers, preachers and singers. So she lives on through the ages, an immortal organization, with part of her membership in this world of conflict, and part in the world of triumph beyond death, but all gathered under the one Head which is Christ (Ephesians i: 10).

III

SHEEP

CHAPTER III

SHEEP

The Bible has more to say about sheep than any other animal. There were no cats in Palestine, and the dogs were outcasts. Horses were very few and exotic. Asses, sheep, and oxen were the domestic animals, and of the three the sheep were by far the most numerous, and came closest to man. The way in which the prophet Nathan speaks of the poor man's ewe lamb, which "grew up together with him, and his children," and which "did eat of his own morsel, and drank of his own cup, and lay in his bosom," is an indication that sheep were household pets in the place now filled by cats, dogs, and other animals. The apostle Paul, indeed, never mentions either sheep or shepherds; but he was born and brought up in Cilicia, where goats took the place of sheep, and where he was taught to make tents from the coarse cloth made from goats' hair.

The sheep played a very important part in the history and discipline of the elect people. From the time of Abel down to the giving of the law at Mount Sinai, the keeping of sheep was their work.

When any of them turned aside from this to tillage of the soil, trouble always followed. So it came upon Noah, after he made his vineyard; and on Jacob, after he built his house on the parcel of ground he bought in Shechem. Through those centuries, whether spent in Palestine or in Egypt, the Hebrews were shepherds and nothing else, depending upon the animal which supplied them with both food and clothing, and for whose support they must move from place to place in most of the localities where they sought a home. Even when they obtained possession of their own country, and became a people of city-dwellers, with fields and vineyards of their own, the care of sheep remained a chief industry. The tribes who settled beyond Jordan had no other employment; and as much of the hill country of Judæa was unfit for tillage, but supplied grazing for sheep and goats, the majority of the people even west of the Jordan seem to have been sheep-owners, if not shepherds.

There was a wise purpose in this. The keeping of sheep exercises a refining influence upon character. The life of the hunter, which Esau preferred to it, tends to make men savage and cruel. The shepherd's work teaches them to be humane and kindly. He who is to live by sheep must care for sheep. He must keep them on his

mind at all times, as their protector against wild beasts, and their provider, to lead them to the green pastures and the still waters. In more northern countries he must plan to protect them against sudden storms, and burial under the snow-drifts. It is well known, The London Times once said, that those who invest in sheep simply to make money out of them are sure to lose money. They must have another motive if they are to get on with them, or at least they must employ as shepherds those who have that motive, and who will be always planning for the sheep, often against the indifference of the owner.* The mere hireling, who does not make the sheep his own in his interest in them, is useless in every way.

The calamity of America before Columbus was that it had no sheep, except one wild and untamable species of mountain sheep. Not only was the refining influence of the shepherd's life wanting to the aborigines, but they had nothing to carry them over the transition from the life of the savage hunter to that of the settled farmer. When

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* It illustrated this from the experience of those who employed convicts on the big Australian sheep-walks. The pickpockets made the best shepherds, because they had been accustomed to watch closely those they meant to rob. Men of better education, who had been transported for forgery and similar crimes, were of no use at all.

General Miles, in 1886, brought the hitherto untamable Apaches to terms, he secured for them from the national Government a supply of sheep and cattle. They soon became shepherds and cowboys, and never went on the warpath again.

God had a further purpose in keeping his people to the work of the shepherd. It enabled them to understand better his own relation to them, as their Shepherd. Just as they had to keep on their minds the flock of silly sheep they tended, so he was caring for them, providing for their wants, defending them against their enemies, and showing them his goodness through all their lives. He was teaching them to say, "The Lord is my shepherd," and to recognize him as "the Shepherd of Israel," as well as of each single soul among them. That is the meaning of that wonderful Twenty-third Psalm, in which the shepherd's care of his sheep is recognized as a parable of God's care of his people. Alongside it stands the tenth chapter of the Gospel according to John, in which our Lord takes the place of the Jehovah of the Old Testament as the Shepherd of the spirits of men.

It is, however, not the shepherd, but the sheep, that is my subject. There are points about this animal which are suggestive, in connection with the use made of it in Bible teaching.

I. The sheep is a mountain animal. Man has brought it down to the plains for his convenience; but it belongs to the hills, and it acquired its habits there. Its thick fleece was given it as its defense against the cold winds of the hills. It still shows an instinct to seek the hills. If you turn a number of lambs loose in a field, which has a hillock in it, they will make for that hillock, and fight each other for possession of it, and find happiness in perching on it. The mountaineering habits of their remote ancestors find vent in this.

As God's sheep we also belong to the hills. We are native to a higher level than that on which we find ourselves, and all that is best in us yearns for that level. In our noblest moments we have glimpses of it, and we know that there the pulse beats more strongly, and we breathe quicker and more joyfully, than in the damps and mists of the lower plains of life. Like the lambs, we climb joyfully any petty hillock that suggests our rightful height. Even our worldly ambitions are often an expression of our restlessnesss on the plains, and our eagerness for what corresponds to our origin on the heights, however mistaken the means we use for this.

II. As the sheep comes from a level on which mud and mire are unknown, it is a clean animal. On the plains it often falls into the mire, but it

never stays in it. It always struggles to be out of it and to be clean again. The pig belongs to the lower level, and has no dislike to mud and mire. It enjoys them, and returns to its wallowing, if you clean it (II Peter ii: 22).

As God's sheep we yearn for cleanness. We also may fall into the mire of sin and uncleanness, but we find no rest there. We struggle to get out of the filth, and long to be clean again, as did David, when he wrote the Fifty-first Psalm:—

> Purify me with hyssop, and I shall be clean:
> Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.

He was badly defiled when he wrote that, having fallen into two of the worst sins a man can be guilty of. But by the help of God's Spirit he was taught the way and the speech of a true repentance, and has been teaching these to the world ever since. An American poet, the Rev. John B. Tabb, gives expression to this truth in a poem he calls "The Difference":—

> Unc' Si, de Holy Bible say,
> In speakin' ob de jus',
> Dat he do fall sebben times a day:
> Now, how's de sinner wuss?
>
> Well, chile, de slip may come to all;
> But den de diffe'nce foller,—
> For ef you watch him when he fall,
> De jus' man do not waller.

III. The sheep, as a mountain animal, found safety on those craggy heights, and escaped from its foes by the swiftness of its leap from rock to rock. When brought down to the plains it leaves behind it its means of safety, and becomes the most helpless and defenseless of animals. It has almost no courage, no means of swift flight, and generally no weapon of defense. It must find its safety in the shepherd's care for it; and he must be one who takes all the risks for it, even to laying down his life for it if need arise.

God does not pay us the compliment of saying we are either wise or resourceful, when he calls us his sheep. He knows we are always in peril on the lower levels of life, and must lift up our eyes to the hills to seek our safety. We must find it in him who came down to take us into his care, and to lay down his life for his sheep.

"Of all the sheep that are fed on earth," says Frederick Pease, "Christ's sheep are the most simple. Always losing themselves; doing little else in this world but lose themselves; never finding themselves; always found by Some One else; getting perpetually into sloughs, and snows, and bramble thickets; like to die there, but for their Shepherd, who is forever finding them and bearing them back, with torn fleeces, and eyes full of fear."

IV. It was from the heights that the sheep brought the habit of following its leader. On the hills the leader must see for all, and if any do not jump where he does, they are likely to go headlong down some chasm. So if you hold a stick before the bellwether, and make him jump it, every sheep in the flock will jump when it comes to that spot, even though the stick has been taken away. "Like a flock of sheep," has become a proverbial expression for the way in which a crowd or mob of men do just as their leaders do, without any thought of their own. A class of little girls were asked, "If there are six sheep resting under a wall, and one of them gets up and jumps over it, how many will be left?" Most of them said there would be five left, but one girl, a farmer's daughter, said: "There will be none left. If one goes, all the rest will follow."

In those also whom God calls his sheep there is the instinct to seek a leader and to follow him. It often leads to perverse and foolish choices of a leader. It makes us run after quacks and misleaders, if we have not found the right Master. Some sort of master we must have. We were not born to be masterless and independent beings. "It is always a choice of masters," says Phillips Brooks, "to which Christ is urging men. It is not by striking off allegiance, but by finding your true

Lord, and serving him with a complete submission, that you escape from slavery." Some one we must serve and follow, and we often show it by submitting to a yoke which is bondage. "Other lords have had dominion over us," because our hearts craved the true, wise, liberating leadership of the True Shepherd, who goes before his sheep and calls them by name.

But it is to no blind following that he calls men as his sheep. They are children of light, and of the day, and are called upon to judge of themselves what is right (Luke xii: 57). What he asks of us is not thoughtless acquiescence in authority or tradition, but the roused and active exercise of our powers of intelligence, in the assurance that the more men think the more they will thank—the more they use their powers of discrimination, the more they will discern the truth of his claims to their allegiance. The Scriptures, as Coleridge says, distinguish themselves from all other books which claim to disclose the mind of God to men by the frequency and the urgency with which they call upon us to exercise our powers of thought, and by their assurance that this will bring us not to denial or rejection of the truth, but to acceptance of it.

IV
FOOD

CHAPTER IV

FOOD

In many if not most of the forms of worship known to us, food holds a place, through some sort of feast being recognized as a symbol of the relation between the worshiper and the object of his worship. In most cases this is a feast in which they both partake, and in which the deity accepts the relation of host and protector to his guest, with all that belongs to the obligations of hospitality. He is thus pledged to a perpetual good will and helpfulness. Commonly, the matter of the feast is a sacrifice, first given to the god and his official representatives, and divided among all concerned according to recognized rules. An attempt has been made to explain in this way the sacrifices and feasts of the Mosaic system. But this is to misconceive the biblical conception of the relation of Jehovah to his covenant people. That relation is strictly conditioned upon their observance of his law, and has nothing of the absolute character of the obligations existing between either kinsman and kinsman, or between host and guest.

In the Mosaic law feasts hold a very outstand-

ing place. Three great feasts every year drew the people of all parts of the land to the center of the nation's worship, but it was in that of the passover that the people's feeding upon a sacrifice was the central fact. It was a symbolic statement of the truth that the life of the human spirit is as dependent upon what it gets from God, as are the life, health, and growth of the human body upon natural food. Yet there are few passages in the Old Testament in which this is brought into clear view. In the Thirty-fourth Psalm the exhortation is found:—

> Oh taste and see that Jehovah is good:
> Blessed is the man that taketh refuge in him.

And the prophet Amos (viii: 11) says, "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord Jehovah, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of Jehovah."

It is in the New Testament that not only is food used symbolically, but the truth that food in one of the great parables of God is insisted upon. It is especially in the sixth chapter of the Fourth Gospel that our Lord does this, by presenting the spiritual reality to which it corresponds.

But let me observe first of all that our Lord seemed to find an especial pleasure in the feasts of

his countrymen, and not only in their solemn religious festivals, but in their social feasts, to which neighbor invited neighbor. He seems to have thought these the most innocent of their social usages, and the best fitted to develop in them the generosity, the courtesy, and the cheerfulness which became the children of the kingdom. While the rest of their life was based upon the Mammonite principle of "nothing for nothing," their feasts were given and not purchased, and therefore like the grand generosity of their Father in heaven. While elsewhere they stood upon their rights, and made the most of their claims upon others, those who came to a feast in the spirit of it would be thinking more of others than of themselves. In the fourteenth chapter of the Third Gospel he holds up the ideal of feast-making and feast-taking, and contrasts with this the self-seeking which spoils the feast, the rivalry which would convert it into an exchange of favors, and the joyless, worldly spirit which would put feasting out of life, and would substitute the enjoyment of personal possessions in its place. I am not speaking here of the spiritual significance of the teachings of that chapter, but of their social bearings.

The next thing we have to notice is that when he came to establish the two symbols or sacraments of his kingdom, as he took one of them from the

purifications of the Old Testament, so he took the other from its feasts. In each case, he takes an immemorial and almost universal usage, in which are employed the simplest elements of our human life, and sets them in such new associations, and surrounds them with such new sanctities, that they become new things to us. He could be original without affecting novelty.

Luther rightly says that the sixth chapter of John does not speak of the Lord's Supper, but of that of which the Lord's Supper speaks. It presents to us the mystery of spiritual nutrition, in its parallel to the mystery of natural nutrition. For both are mysterious, and not one alone. We can trace the steps by which food is digested into chyle, and chyle is transformed into blood, and blood in its circulation through vein and artery replaces the waste caused by every exertion of our bodily powers. But to know these steps is not to know how the vital force transforms dead substance into living tissue.

How can the mute unconscious bread
  Become the living tongue,
And nerves, through which our pleasures spread,
  And which by pain are wrung?

Can lifeless water help to form
  The living, leaping blood,
Whose gentle flow, in passion's storm
  Becomes a ruffled flood?

Thomas Toke Lynch writes in "The Rivulet." We can escape all sense of the wonder in this by dullness of mind, or through never giving it thought; but otherwise we must feel that we are in the presence of a mystery in our daily bread.

Our Lord in the synagogue of Capernaum insists on the spiritual process, to which our daily bread corresponds. There are three steps in his presentation of it: (1) That he, the Son of man, can give those who hear him bread which will endure unto everlasting life, whereas the natural bread perishes in our use of it. (2) That he himself is the bread, which comes down from heaven for the life of the world. (3) That this bread of life is his flesh, and his blood; that is, his humanity as the Son of man, in which the spirits of men are to find their nourishment as spirits, unto a life everlasting. It is not his example, or his teaching, or his influence, which is the spiritual food of men, but himself. It is through a union with him, as close and appropriating as that which their bodies sustain to their food, that they are nourished into spiritual life, health, and growth.

I. The first point in the parable of food is that it teaches us the dependence of man. We are not little gods, to stand alone and supply our own strength. We are so constructed that our

bodies are undergoing a constant destruction and renewal. Every act, every thought, every emotion, works to the destruction of animal tissues, leaving an effete matter, which is eliminated by various organs, and through appropriate channels. If this elimination were not accompanied by a replacement of what is lost, we should perish of exhaustion. When some organic failure makes the replacement impossible or insufficient, we waste away through innutrition, and our bodies die. To our ordinary consciousness our bodies are permanent solidities. They are, however, in a state of flux, like a river, whose bed would be left empty if the onflow of its waters were not replaced by a constantly fresh supply. It is from the world without us and beneath us that we are constantly replacing our bodies in the shape of food.

Unlike our bodies, our spirits are not built up of separate particles which can be destroyed and replaced. But in their case also, constant nutrition is required to their true life and growth. We live only by the reception of life from the Son of man. He is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption, and power, and whatever else our spirits call for. We have none of these things of our own, but only a capacity to receive them from

the Son of man. From him come our faith to grasp, our strength to resist, our wisdom to guide our lives. We have these only by our incessantly receiving them.

"To keep the lamp alive
With oil we fill the bowl;
'Tis water makes the willow thrive,
And grace that feeds the soul.

"Man's wisdom is to seek
His strength in God alone;
And e'en an angel would be weak
Who trusted in his own.

"Retreat beneath his wings,
And in his grace confide!
This more exalts the King of kings
Than all your works beside.

"In Jesus is our store;
Grace issues from his throne;
Whoever says, 'I want no more,'
Confesses he has none."

II. The fact that we are hungry when we have not been fed at the usual or right time is a part of the parable. Natural hunger is a beneficent arrangement. The human race would perish but for hunger, which impresses upon us painfully the necessity of replacing the waste of our bodies. Without it we easily might carry our abstinence to a point from which there would be no recovery.

There is the same beneficence in the hunger of the human spirit for God. We can still and silence it for a time. The prodigal did so, when he was busy with his waste of his substance; but there arose a mighty famine in that land, and it reached him as well as others. He flew for help to man, and found only degradation and disappointment. He envied the very swine their fullness and their satisfaction, but could not share it. He could not, because he was a son, with a father's house in the distance, and plenty of bread for him there if he would seek it. When he came to himself, after being beside himself, that is insane, he did seek it, and found it.

The essential misery and unrest of a godless life is but the hunger of a disinherited spirit for the bread at the Father's table. Even the paroxysms of men's sinning are, sometimes at least, proof of their failure to find true satisfaction in life. It is our grandeur, as it is our pain, that our hearts are too large for the whole world to fill them, and that only the bread that comes down from heaven for the life of the world can do so. As Carl Spencer says:—

> Whoso the downward paths hath trod,
> The wrecks of human life to scan,
> Must write, "This creature, being man,
> Was ruined having less than God."

But hunger is not always the paroxysm of starvation. It is the daily and pleasant experience of wholesome natures. The saint hungers after God as well as the sinner, but with no despairing anguish. It is the preparation for a fresh enjoyment of what is always within the reach of his faith. And as the absence of natural hunger before we partake of food is a proof of inferior vitality, so is it in the spiritual life. "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled." On the other hand, there is a false satiety, a self-satisfaction with what we are, which was the sin of the Pharisees: "Woe unto you, ye that are full! for ye shall hunger."

III. This parable of nutrition is like all the rest in that it does not "walk on all fours." The correspondence between the two kinds is not complete and absolute. The body is nourished on what is lower than itself, and accomplishes this by assimilating its food to itself. We use for this only impersonal, selfless things, which we may treat as means to our ends. The horror of cannibalism is common to all races which have risen to the point of discerning what human personality means, and grows out of the fact that the victim is a personal self equally with us.

Those races which ascribe selfhood to animals have a horror of eating them.

The human spirit, on the contrary, feeds only upon what is above itself; but by the law that the higher assimilates the lower, it is assimilated to its food. "He that eateth my flesh," says the Saviour, "and drinketh my blood hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day . . . He . . . abideth in me, and I in him. As the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father; so he that eateth me, he also shall live because of me." This great saying has been fulfilled in millions of lives, in that they have been fed, nourished, and comforted out of this one life. We can see in a wooden fashion what the intercourse between man and man may attain to. We have glimpses of the possibility of two human spirits almost transcending the limits which inclose personality, and living in and for each other. Jesus calmly says, "Abide in me, and I in you!" and although we know not what it means or how it is possible, we discover that it is the most real of human experiences.

IV. With the exception of a few savage races, mankind are agreed in making mealtimes occasions of social reunion, of at least the family. It has been shown that our Saviour gave his approval to this aspect of the social life of Judæa, in

his presence at their feasts, his suggesting the finest way of keeping them, and his use of them in his parables as symbols of the kingdom of God. So in the second great sacrament of the church, he bids his people come together for a social feast, and every direction he gives with regard to its proper observance is addressed to them in the plural. "Take, eat . . . Do this in remembrance of me . . . Drink ye all of it." He speaks to them as a Christian congregation, and the apostle quotes to the congregation in Corinth those very directions, as applying to them also. Not one person present at the supper is treated as having no share or interest in it, and its observance by one or two communicants in the presence of a congregation is a palpable subversion of its meaning and purpose.

To eat with any one implies good feeling toward him, according to the usage of the East, in which the Bible was written. The Psalmist (Psalm xli: 9), makes his complaint:—

> Yea, mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted,
> Who did eat of my bread,
> Hath lifted up his heel against me.

Especially the eastern host shows a marked good will by singling out a guest, to whom he will give some favorite morsel. So our Lord did with

Judas, giving him the sop which he had dipped in the dish; but on his receiving it, "Satan entered into him."

Both these points are applicable to the Lord's Supper. It is a social feast, to be observed by all the Christians present, and not by a few. It is a feast of charity, to which we are to come in good will to all men, and especially those who sit at meat with us. It is the Lord's Supper, and he is present as the host; and we, in accepting his invitation, profess that we believe him our friend, and that we are determined to be his friends. He is not present "in, with, or under" the elements. Neither does he confer in this feast any grace or benefit which he withholds at other times and on other occasions. The great mystery of eating his flesh, and drinking his blood, is not confined to the sacrament. It was shared by myriads who lived before his Incarnation, as by the Psalmist king, who wrote:—

Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies:
Thou hast anointed my head with oil;
My cup runneth over.

But the sacrament is an occasion when the Lord "keeps tryst" with his people. He never is absent when the two or three gather in his name.

But he aims at making us feel and realize his being with us at this feast, and he has chosen the elements and the acts which will aid us in this. Sense weighs heavily against faith at other times, even in the worship of God. In this service, it is enlisted on the side of faith. The bread and the cup are there, and we behold them, knowing that in every year since he sat down with the apostles in the upper room in Jerusalem, that bread has been broken, and that wine poured out, and that he has been present with every company of his people who have kept the feast, and has blessed them in their reception of it. And that blessing has been that, while they ate of the earthly food, their spirits were nourished by that which came down from heaven for the life of the world. Whatever they may have added to the feast as he made it at the first, and whatever they may have taken away from it, if they have kept the essentials, and have looked to him in faith, they have found him present, and have fed upon him.

His presence is not in the elements nor upon an altar, but in the Christian congregation. "I am in the midst of you." So the right posture for the Christian minister is not that which turns him away from the people, for in so doing he is turning his back upon his divine Master, whatever may be the thing toward which he is turning.

The shekinah, the dwelling-place of God, is "with men, and he shall dwell with them, and they shall be his peoples, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God."

V
TOUCH

CHAPTER V

TOUCH

"Touch is the sense which love employs." It means the annihilation of distance between one who loves and that which he loves, so that mere nearness is replaced by contact. Our sense of the significance of touch finds expression in such phrases as "getting into touch," or "living in touch" with people. They stand for sympathetic contact, the sympathy which seeks contact, and does not keep others "at arm's length." Children learn it in their mothers' laps, and are never content to be merely near those they love without actually touching them.

The Old Testament uses the word "touch" mostly in an adverse sense. It stands for an aggression of an enemy rather than the approach of a friend. It occurs in the many prohibitions of contact with unclean things and persons. It is one of the forbidding terms of the Mosaic law. When the apostle rebukes those who would convert Christianity into a sort of Judaism, he charges them with setting up ordinances, "Handle not, nor taste, nor touch" (Colossians ii: 21).

The only favorable sense the word has in the Hebrew Scriptures is where one in authority touches an inferior to confer power. So in Isaiah's vision in the temple, one of the seraphim flew to the prophet, and touched his mouth with a live coal from the altar. Similarly, Jeremiah tells us that "Jehovah put forth his hand, and touched my mouth; and Jehovah said unto me, Behold, I have put my words in thy mouth." So Daniel says of Gabriel, that "he touched me, and set me upright. And he said, Behold, I will make thee know what shall be in the latter time of the indignation."

The spirit of the new covenant is that of nearness, while that of the old was that of distance. The latter laid its emphasis upon the separateness of God and man, that it might guard the elect people from idolatry, and from the unseemly familiarity with God which leads to idolatry and even worse things.* Its lesson was the awfulness

* There is permanent need of both modes of the divine disclosure. Through our human frailty we are liable to lose sight of the greatness of God, in the sense of his nearness and his helpfulness. It has been remarked of the Japanese converts to Christianity that they are too apt to think of God simply in relation to their own needs, and with too little awe of his divine majesty. But, as Mr. Jowett of Birmingham says, it is only through communion with a great God that men become great Christians. Rev-

and the transcendence of God; and that truth must be learned before the world was prepared to enter the next stage of its education, and learn of his immanence and his nearness.

I. The Incarnation opens the new stage, and its symbol is the touch by which the Son of God expresses his love to men. He "lived in touch" with those he came to save. He got as near to them as possible, although this shocked many who cherished the spirit of separation, from which the Pharisees took their sectarian name. They murmured, saying, "This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them." They said in Jericho, "He is gone in to lodge with a man that is a sinner." The Pharisee, in whose house the sinful woman washed his feet with her tears, said to himself, "This man, if he were a prophet, would have perceived who and what manner of woman this is that toucheth him, that she is a sinner." They

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erence lies at the foundation of a godly character, and the lack of it is one of the sins of our time. It is of reverence (*theosebeia*) that the apostle writes that it "is profitable for all things, having promise of the life which now is, and of that which is to come." The word is not found in any of his earlier epistles, but it occurs nine times in the first to Timothy, and once in the second, and in that to Titus. Did this enrichment of his vocabulary grow out of experiences among his converts, such as are recorded about the new Christians of Japan?

thought he was breaking down the distinction between good and bad among men, by failing to keep the bad "at arm's length," as they did. They even suspected his own holiness in seeing the company he kept, and applied to him such proverbs as "Touch pitch and be defiled;" "Birds of a feather flock together." Nor is it clear that we have the right to cast stones at them, for what would we have felt when we saw him accepting invitations from men whose occupations we thought disgraceful and immoral, and sitting at meat with men and women whose characters were unquestionably bad? Would we not be afraid of compromising our reputations if we did so? Would we not talk of lowering the truth, or of effacing the line of distinction between us and the world? But he let nothing stand between himself and those he was seeking to save.

II. In the simplest and most literal way he ministered by his touch to human needs. When Simon's wife's mother lay sick of a great fever, "he came and took her by the hand, and raised her up; and the fever left her" (Mark i: 31). When he came to the house of Jairus, the ruler of the synagogue, he stopped the noisy lamentations over the dead girl, and "taking the child by the hand, he saith unto her, Talitha cumi . . . Damsel, I say unto thee, Arise. And

straightway the damsel rose up, and walked" (Mark v: 41, 42). As he left the house of Jairus, two blind men besought him to heal them. "Then touched he their eyes, saying, According to your faith be it done unto you. And their eyes were opened" (Matthew ix: 29). When they brought him a deaf and dumb man in the coasts of Decapolis, "he took him aside from the multitude privately, and put his fingers into his ears . . . and touched his tongue . . . and saith unto him, Ephphatha, that is, Be opened. And his ears were opened and the bound of his tongue was loosed, and he spake plain" (Mark vii: 32-35). At Bethsaida, a blind man was brought to him, "and when he had spit on his eyes, he laid his hands upon him," and gave him sight (Mark viii: 23). As he came down from the Transfiguration, they brought him the demoniac boy, for whom his disciples could do nothing, and the evil spirit rent the boy until "the more part said, He is dead. And Jesus took him by the hand, and raised him up; and he arose" (Mark ix: 26, 27). When Peter smote off the ear of Malchus, servant to the high priest, Jesus "touched his ear, and healed him" (Luke xxii: 51).

In none of these cases, so far as man can judge, was it necessary for him to touch those he healed. He did fully as much in other cases, where he did

not use his hands in this way, and in some cases he healed those who were at a distance (Matthew viii: 13). It seems to have been as the expression of his sympathy with the sufferers that he touched them, just as we lay our hands on the shoulders of our friends when we want to speak to them out of our hearts.

Especially noteworthy are two cases, in which he incurred ceremonial defilement by this use of his hands. One is that of the son of the widow of Nain: "He came nigh and touched the bier" (Luke vii: 14), although he thus insured legal defilement (Numbers xix: 11), for having to do with a dead body. More striking is his healing of the leper, as he came down from the mountain of the great sermon: "He stretched forth his hand, and touched him" (Matthew viii: 3), although the law of Moses shut the leper out from all contact with other men (Leviticus xiii: 45), and to break this law was to incur uncleanness. Never shall I forget hearing Dr. Alexander Maclaren preach on this miracle: "Why did He touch him, even before he healed him? Because he saw that the first need of that poor soul, shut off for years from his kind, was sympathy—that, even before healing. He must have been a loathsome sight, and probably more so to our Lord's senses than to those of other men. But he put forth his

hand and touched him, as the expression of his pity and sympathy. And was not that what he did in the Incarnation itself, drawing near to us in our utter defilement, taking hold of us, as he did of that poor leper, putting forth that gracious and mighty hand to touch us?"

III. This view is confirmed by his use of his hands for other gracious purposes than healing. When the mothers brought the little children to him, "he took them in his arms, and blessed them, laying his hands upon them" (Mark x: 16). It was a visible expression of that interest in childhood, and love of children, which is notable in the gospel story. His every word about them, except perhaps his rebuking parable about the children who would not play at either wedding or funeral (Matthew xi: 17), is one of joyful affection.

Along with this in spiritual beauty is the scene in the upper room, where he ate the passover with his disciples. When they came in, there were the ewer full of water, the towel, and the basin. It was some one's work to wash the feet of the company from the dust of the highway, if they were to enjoy the feast without distraction; but none of them would. One looked up at the ceiling, and another out of the window, pretending they did not see the ewer and the basin. They made for their places at the table, each of them thinking

it beneath his dignity to stoop to such a service, and finding the best reasons why some other of the Twelve should do it. Then the Master arose, poured the water into the basin, and girded himself with the towel, and stooped to serve them with the loving touch of a cleansing hand. It was the truest humility, which means getting down to the ground (*humus*) because God has something for one to do there that cannot be done anywhere else.

IV. As love evokes love in return, so our Lord's touch encouraged others to touch him. In Galilee, "wheresoever he entered, into villages, or cities, or into the country, they laid the sick in the market-places, and besought him that they might touch if it were but the border of his garment: and as many as touched him were made whole" (Mark vi: 56; Matthew xiv: 36). An outstanding instance of this is the woman who came behind him in the throng and touched the hem of his garment, and was healed of the disease which had been weakening and impoverishing her for twelve years. But it was out of himself, and not out of the garment, that the power had passed which wrought the cure. The hand got nothing, and the garment gave nothing, but her faith had brought her into contact with the Saviour, and thus made her whole.

Apart from demands upon his power to heal, his friends show their affection by touching him. The woman which was a sinner breaks through the bonds of pharisaic propriety and follows him into the house of Simon, the Pharisee, "and standing behind at his feet, weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears, and wiped them with the hair of her head, and kissed his feet" (Luke vii: 38). Dr. Melanchthon W. Stryker suggests that there is as much of affection as of doubt in the demand of the apostle Thomas, "Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe" (John xx: 25). He thinks this was an expression of his sincere love for the Master, which asked for the touch that is more intimate than sight. May we not say that the substance of the speech shows doubt, but the form of it affection? "That disciple, whom Jesus loved" especially, is the evangelist who records for us the saying of Thomas, and it recalls his own language in the opening words of his great epistle: "That which was from the beginning, that which we have heard, that which we have seen with our eyes, that which we beheld, *and our hands handled,* concerning the Word of life . . . declare we unto you also, that ye also may have fellowship with us: yea, and our

fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ."

V. When our Lord is about to pass from the region of sense to that of faith, he assures his people that they are to lose nothing by the change. He will still be "in touch with them." The Comforter is not to take his place, but to take what is his and make it known to them. What otherwise might have been mere facts of history in their memories, are to become the present, living truths of their Christian experience, and not theirs only, but of all who believe on him to the end of time. For the Spirit's work is to make Jesus Christ more real to us than he was to those who saw his works and heard him speak. Through his ministry, those years of our Lord's ministry, with his sacrificial death and triumphant resurrection, become a part of all true Christians' lives.

The gospel calls upon us to "live in touch" with the God whom Jesus reveals as his Father and ours. We are not called to submission to a distant and unlovable deity, like the Allah of the Moslem; nor to a chilly adoration of a philosophic absolute, who can be described only in negative terms; nor to the worship of an infinite rabbi, such as the later Jewish theology presents. We are brought to a living communion with a gracious

Friend and Father, whose love to us is reflected in the affection of all who have been dearest and kindest to us among men. He is nearer to us than these could be, nearer than our very selves. As F. W. Faber says, "God never is so far off as only to be near." No language that does not break the bounds of our finite personality is too strong to express our closeness to him "in him we live, and move, and have our being."

It is the Incarnation which makes this intelligible to us. The Old Testament presents God and man in contrast and antithesis, as many Christians still speak of them, though not in Christian fashion. Such language was necessary in the lower classes of God's great school, because any other would have led men to error and idolatry. It is not without its uses still, when the thought of the nearness of God obscures his awfulness to us. But God after speaking "to the fathers in the prophets in many parts and in many manners, hath in the end of the days spoken unto us in his Son" (Hebrews i: 1, 2) fully and clearly; and that not so much by what the Son said, as by what the Son is. In him our human nature is exhibited in its true character, that which was in the thought of God when he said, "Let us make man in our own image." Our humanity stands up in Jesus Christ, a thing pure,

spotless, and splendid; and it is in him that we are to see and estimate it, and to be changed to that image by the vision and the fellowship (II Corinthians iii: 18). We are to regard as inhuman all that falls below "the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ." It is not true that "to err is human;" nor should we speak of "the infirmities of human nature," but with Paul, of the infirmity of our flesh; that is, of the perversion of our human nature by sin.

VI. Working "in touch" is the method of the kingdom of God. Jesus shrank from no contact with the men he sought to save, although he must have felt their degradation as we never can feel it. There was no "submerged tenth" too deeply sunk for him to follow it into the depths, that he might lift it up to goodness and forgiveness. Men have tried to do his work while standing afar from those they sought to benefit; but to little result. The greatest who have followed in his footsteps, have followed him in this as in other things. The Moravians who offered to become slaves, that they might be allowed to reach the negro slaves in the West Indies, and who made their abode among the lepers, knowing what that must end in, that they might reach that class, were illustrations of his method, and of his unresting pity for lost men.

Our own generation has seen a notable amount of return to his method, even among those who are not working in his name. Social reformers are discovering that they can do little good for people of any sort, while they hold them at arm's length. "I have learned," says a worker in one of the University settlements, "that you can get access to the people who need you only by living with them. They will not come to you; but Jew and Gentile will make you welcome if you come to them. Our meetings for their benefit are a failure. Our personal intercourse with them, man to man, has been promising great good. It is of no use to come once or twice to see them; you must live with them, if you are to do anything for them."

So Thomas Chalmers gave up his wealthy parish in Glasgow, and took charge of one in the "wynds," that he might get near to the poor, and find some way of relieving their wants without pauperizing them by either public and unloving assistance, or heedless giving! So Caroline Hill took charge of the wretched court in East London, which rarely had missed mention for a day in the police reports, and by living among its people was able to change it into a place of sobriety, thrift, and honesty. "Not alms but a friend," is the motto of the new charity, which

Chalmers began, and which Miss Hill revived. The man or woman who would help the poor must give himself to them. Anything short of that is cheap, and likely to be mischievous. The touch of a loving hand may be worth more than all the gifts with which you may fill it.

We are learning to cease patronage of the poor, and to follow Jesus Christ in his ministry of touch and sympathy. The love which does not shrink from contact with what often must be repulsive, is that which follows in his footsteps, and interprets him to men. But the love must be there. The loveless gift, as Chalmers said, degrades the recipient. Nor is anything more repulsive to the poor than to be approached with insincere phrases, and shallow professions of interest in them and their needs. No eyes are keener than those which have been sharpened by want, and they have learned to meet insincerity with insincerity. None who approach them in the spirit of the divine Master need fear being misconstrued or repelled.

VI

SOWING AND REAPING

CHAPTER VI

SOWING AND REAPING

It was not until the Hebrew people came into possession of the land promised to their fathers, that they were able to take up the tillage of the soil as the means of their support. From Abraham to Joshua, a period of at least five centuries, they were exclusively shepherds, and generally without any settled habitation. The conquest of Palestine enabled them to become farmers, and lay aside their nomadic habits. The change was much greater than appears on the surface of things. The life of the shepherd was one of hardship and exposure, through want of homes and their equipment. It was one of constant peril, as it admitted of no permanent defense against marauders. It was a life of great monotony, without interruption of routine except at lambing and shearing time. It was commonly a life of painful solitude, and thus exposed to the melancholy which isolation from other men breeds.

The life of the ancient farmer was not that of a man living in a farmhouse apart, but that of a resident in a walled city, who went out to till his

fields. It was therefore more wholesome for the mind, and of greater safety, as well as brightened by closer social association. The work was more varied, and the rest more cheerful. Time could be found for festivals, and especially for a weekly Sabbath, such as the shepherd never knew, because his work must be the same for every day of the week. Hence the silence of the Old Testament as to the observance of the Sabbath before Moses and the giving of the law. The more strenuous employments of the new age and its more rapid societary movement demanded the alternations of rest; and this need has grown greater with every century since that time.

By becoming farmers, the Hebrew people moved to a higher level of the world's social development, while those peoples that did not make the change remained on a lower. The difference grew originally out of a higher faith in the fixed laws which govern the world, and especially the law that "whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." It is difficult for us, after millenniums of uniform experience, to realize the uncertainty with which primitive man must have faced this problem of sowing and reaping. He would not have found it incredible, if told by any one claiming knowledge of the matter, that the sowing of wheat would produce a crop of spelt or

tares, or no crop whatever. The races which found it hard to reach any certainty, unless driven on by necessity, clung to more palpable ways of getting their food by hunting and fishing, while others got as far as keeping sheep or cattle. In the Bible story, Esau is the type of the distrustful races; while Jacob, with his crop of red lentils, stands for those which had courage to risk their seed in sowing, in the faith that the harvest would be of the same kind, and abundant enough to repay the risk.

It is in the Zend-Avesta, the sacred book of the ancient Persians, that the antagonism of the two kinds of peoples comes out most clearly. The Persian was a tiller of the soil, and regarded it as a sacred thing, not to be profaned by the burial of corpses in it, while it repaid this reverence by the gifts of the harvest. Their savage neighbors, the Turanians, to the north of Persia, despised agriculture, and the Zend-Avesta makes the contrast between the two modes of life almost identical with the distinction between good and bad men. The Turanian justified this by his readiness to plunder the harvest-fields of his industrious neighbors. A similar situation existed in America before the Spanish conquests. The people of the warmer parts of the continent had been driven by necessity to the cultivation of maize and

manioc. Their harvests were plundered by the more savage tribes to the north, who also killed or enslaved the cultivators. The Navajos named the months of their calendar from the animal they most hunted in each, and one was "Mexican month."

In the long run, the tillers of the soil have come to the front as the masters of the world, because of their wealth, their social coherence, and their trained intelligence. The taproot of their success was their faith in the beneficent order which controls the world. They have learned also that the same great law of the harvest pervades the whole of human life. The Greek poet Hesiod, the Latin orator Cicero, and the Hebrew apostle Paul express this in almost identical terms. They apply to the moral life of men the saying, "A man reaps as he sows," meaning that we here touch a natural law, which has its exact parallel in the life of man as a responsible being.

The Scriptures recognize a double correspondence here. The Old Testament, for the most part, finds this in the reaping of what we sow in the conduct of our lives. The New Testament applies the analogy more commonly to the labors of our Master and his servants for the welfare of mankind. Let us look at some of the aspects of this great parable.

I. God and man work together in the tillage of the soil, and the ingathering of the harvest. Man avails himself of God's law of increase, by which the scanty seed grows into the abundant harvest, supplying seed to the sower and bread to the eater. He casts himself upon the established order of God in the creation, when he risks his seed in the earth. However well he may plant it and tend it, he cannot of himself make one grain germinate, or bring forth one blade out of the earth, as Luther says. Along with his faith goes hope. He looks to see sunshine and rainfall given in due measure, also as part of God's order.

We lose a right sense of this through the bluntness of our perceptions. We have allowed ourselves to grow used to the wonder of God's working in these common things, until all wonder has ceased out of the world for us. We think of nature as a big piece of machinery, which works apart from the presence and will of its Creator. So we find it hard to pray, as his Son bids us, "Give us this day our daily bread." We have allowed the constancy of its coming to hide God's hand in the giving. His Son, however, never took a piece of bread into his hands without blessing the Father who gave it. There must have been something distinctive in his way of doing this. The two disciples did not recognize him

during their walk of five miles with him to Emmaus, but knew him at once when he "took the bread and blessed; and breaking it he gave to them." Must he not have taken it as though it came right out of his Father's hand, as we also should do?

Even the heathen acknowledge this truth in their way. Every pantheon had a deity of the harvest, who was worshiped while the crops were growing, and especially when they were gathered. The only native American idol which has survived the zeal of the Christian missionaries represents the Mexican goddess of the maize plant, and in her honor more festivals were held than for any other. The apostle therefore appealed to a universal belief, when he told the heathen people of Lystra that the "living God, who made the heaven and the earth and the sea, and all that in them is . . . left not himself without witness, in that he did good and gave you from heaven rains and fruitful seasons, filling your hearts with food and gladness." It is upon this truth that our country bases her observance of Thanksgiving day, when the whole nation acknowledges God as the giver of our harvests.

When we pass from the natural to the spiritual order, we find this fact of man's dependence upon God not less evident. We find it so, as the Old

Testament teaches, in the conduct of our lives. We are in the presence of moral laws as distinct as that by which the seed germinates "after its kind," and bears its own fruit.

We all, indeed, are sowing seed of some sort, and thus submitting our lives to the operation of the law of growth; and we all will have a harvest of some sort. It may be a bad one. We may "plow iniquity, and sow trouble," and "reap the same" (Job iv: 8); or "sow iniquity and reap calamity" (Proverbs xxii: 8); or "sow the wind" and "reap the whirlwind" (Hosea viii: 7). But this is more often and properly the neglect of tillage, which leaves the weeds of evil to spring up and possess the soil. It is not the conduct of life, but throwing the reins on the neck of our animal passions and our baser instincts, and bidding them take us where they will.

All real conduct of life is a laying hold of divine help, and working with God. It starts from him, and not from ourselves. We are indeed to work out our own salvation with fear and trembling, because he has worked it in, because he worketh in us to will and to work, for his good pleasure. There can be no good in us, either in germ or in fruition, which is not from him. It is he who implants in our hearts that incorruptible seed, which liveth and abideth,

and which makes us fruitful in the virtues and the activities of a Christian life. Here it is that Christianity parts company from the paganism even of Hesiod and Cicero. The latter, in his dialogue "On the Nature of the Gods," makes one of the speakers remark that men thank the gods for all sorts of external benefits—for prosperity, for safety from perils, for fair children, and beautiful houses; but that no one ever thanks the gods that he is virtuous, honest, chaste, generous. And quite rightly, he thinks, since a man owes these to himself. Christians know that it is just for these that they are most bound to give God thanks.

We find this equally true, as the New Testament teaches it, in the spiritual harvest which is gathered from efforts to do good to men. The greatest and most fruitful workers have been those who felt most clearly their dependence upon God. "I planted," says Paul, "Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. So then neither is he that planteth anything, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase." Man's part, he says is foolishness—"the foolishness of preaching" by which God "is pleased to save them that believe."

It is indeed foolishness to expect sinners to give heed to a message which runs counter to all their

natural inclinations, humbles their pride, and calls upon them to do what is beyond their power. It is a mere waste of words unless God be in it, and make men welcome what is most distasteful, and enable them to believe what is incredible, and to do what is impossible to flesh and blood. It is just this that makes the preaching of the gospel a thing apart from all other speech of man to men. It is a message from God, with the assurance that a divine power attends it, making it possible for sinners to believe and obey it.

The human instrument, indeed, God will not dispense with. "How shall they believe," says the apostle, "in him whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? and how shall they preach, except they be sent?" God has committed this ministry to men, and not to the angels, for the good of men. He draws us "with cords of a man, with bands of love" (Hosea xi:4), in speaking to us through the heart and the voice of a fellow-man, just as in the Incarnation he meets us as one of ourselves—

"So through the thunder comes a human voice
Saying, 'O heart I made, a heart beats here!
Face, my hands fashioned, see it in myself!
Thou hast no power nor mayest conceive of mine,
But love I gave thee, with myself to love,
And thou must love me who have died for thee.'"

Nor is the true preacher a mere lifeless trumpet, through which a message is sounded in our ears. His fitness for the work is through the training he has had from the Spirit of God. The life of the Spirit in his heart gives him an entire assurance of the truth he brings, a lively sense of the need of those he addresses, and a yearning love to reach and touch them. Thus it is made manifest that "the foolishness of God is wiser than men."

II. The farmer proceeds upon the conviction that the law of growth will operate uniformly in every case where the conditions are fairly favorable. We as a people risk hundreds of millions of dollars every year upon that conviction, and the labors of millions of men besides. All this is risked upon something unseen, intangible, and yet real. The gains of the hunter and the herdsman are much more tangible from the outset, but those of the farmer are greater. When European settlement began, the entire population of our country was about a quarter of a million of Indians. They had all the resources of our national area at their disposal, but they lived mainly by hunting and fishing. They suffered from hunger very often, and died of famine in many years. We are feeding nearly ninety millions at home, and we send the food for millions across the Atlantic.

The spiritual law of seedtime and harvest is just as certain, but we are far slower to learn its truth. We even fancy sometimes that we can evade it by our cleverness, although we would not venture upon that with the natural law. By no sort of tillage would we seek a crop of wheat where we had sown only spelt or rye.

The religions of the world are in some cases little else than devices to escape the law of reaping as you have sown, by bribing the divine powers to show favoritism. There are erroneous forms of Christian teaching or believing, which have the same purpose. The notions that some ritual observance, or wearing of a scapular, or an emotional experience which left the life unchanged, or a rigid orthodoxy of the head which has nothing to do with the heart, will serve as a substitute for holy living, are subtle forms of Antinomianism, which reappear in every age. The apostle's doctrine as justification by faith without the works of the law, in the Epistle to the Galatians, has been as much abused in this way, and wrested by the ignorant and the unsteadfast to their own destruction (II Peter iii: 16), as any other part of the Bible. It is, however, in this very epistle that he gives us the solemn warning: "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.

For he that soweth unto his own flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth unto the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap eternal life." God "will render to every man according to his works" (Romans ii: 6). "Follow after peace with all men," says the Epistle to the Hebrews, "and the sanctification without which no man shall see the Lord." John saw the dead before the Throne, "and they were judged every man according to their works."

This spiritual law commends itself to our judgments and our consciences in the most forcible way. It fits into all that we know of the universe, as exactly as does the natural law of gravitation, and we have just as good reason for acting upon its truth. There is nothing that is either factitious or arbitrary about it. The fruits of our lives are the corresponding outcome of what we have been planting and sowing in the conduct of our lives; and in the nature of things they cannot be otherwise. Yet no sinner ever gathers his armful or barnful of thistles and darnell and wild mustard without grumbling at its not being wheat.

Even good men fall short here, though in a less degree. Robert Bruce, the great Scottish preacher, was an eminently good man. When pressed to declare his full belief that the Earl of

Gowrie had made a treasonable attempt on the life of King James, he said they were asking of him a "persuasion of the fact which he could not get for the articles of his belief." "What!" said Lord Kinloss, "are you not fully persuaded of the articles of your belief?" "Not, my lord, as I should be. If you and I were both persuaded that there were a hell, we would do otherwise than as we do." If we felt, at every instant of life, the reality of the spiritual laws which govern life, we would rise to heroic heights of obedience and endurance. Then we would be earning the praise our Lord gives to the pearl-trader, who realized that the one pearl was worth more than all he possessed, and who acted with businesslike promptness on that knowledge. And we would not be falling under that sorrowful rebuke, that the children of this world are wiser after their sort than the children of the Light. Those go to their object as straight as the bird flies, while these hesitate, shilly-shally, and compromise.

III. This stern law of reaping as we sow has a gracious and gospel aspect, in respect to the abundance of the harvest, whether natural or spiritual. Our Lord especially insists upon this. He says that the seed which fell upon good ground bore fruit "thirtyfold, and sixtyfold, and a hundredfold." May we not suppose that he had been

counting the gains in a wheat ear, and saw in this the beneficence of the law of growth, and a prophecy of nature as to the growth of his kingdom? This natural multiplication goes far beyond what we should have expected. It is increase after a divine measure, rather than the human. Our Lord sees another example of this in the mustard plant, which grows from one of the tiniest of seeds, but within the year mounts up into quite a branchy bush, the biggest of the garden herbs of Palestine, and affords rest and shelter for the birds. The Talmud quotes a Rab Simeon, who said he had one in his garden so large that he climbed into it. A third of his illustrations is the diffusion of the morsel of leaven through the six gallons of meal, which we now know to be another instance of vegetable expansion.

To the truth which these illustrate, he constantly returns in his teaching. He tells us of the surprise which awaits us, when we see the great results which will come from seemingly small causes. A cup of cold water, if given in the name of Christ, or even in that of a disciple, shall not lose its reward. The giver may forget it, but not he. Whoever makes sacrifices for Christ's sake and the gospel's "shall receive a hundredfold, and shall inherit eternal life." He who is

found faithful in the handling of five talents or ten, shall be called to bear rule over as many cities. In the day of judgment those who ministered to the needs of his hungry, naked, sick, or imprisoned brethren, will have the same measure of joy as if they had done this to himself. Thus he lifts the law of growth into a very gospel of growth.

His teaching is confirmed by the experiences of even the life that now is. In the conduct of life we are all tempted to despise the small crosses he sends us, the small openings for kindness and self-sacrifice the day brings us, and the petty duties and burdens which fill up our humdrum existence. When we meet these faithfully and nobly, we have our reward on a grander scale than we could have expected. Burdens grow to wings, crosses to crowns, faithful endurance to triumph; and from each discharge of duty we acquire the power to meet the next with efficiency. "We see dimly in the present what is small and what is great," as Lowell says. We are blinded by the illusions of life, and take the great for the small, because it is not the big. Our small victories in the face of temptation are won over obstacles and spiritual enemies of the highest rank, and are won to the shaping of our characters, the strengthening of our wills, the purification of our

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vision, and the increase of our faith and joy. Prof. William James suggests that to do each day of life some one thing we know we ought to do, but do not want to do, would have the result of making us wiser and braver men, and more fit for great things if these fell to our share.

On the New Testament side of the parable, it is the joy of those who work for others to have a present experience of this law of increase. We who teach have it in a lower sphere. Our "boys" come back to us in their manhood and say, "I never forgot what you said to us one day," and go on to quote something which has escaped our memories completely. Every day of earnest and honest work in the schoolroom or the college class reaches some with a touch which helps to shape lives in the years of their plasticity. There is, however, one teacher who far surpasses us in this. It is she who has the first word with her child, before any other can reach him, and who is molding him in ways which neither she nor the child can see. It will take heaven to show what the work of Christian mothers has been in building up the kingdom, and it will be a joyful surprise to many a mother, perhaps to all of them.

The minister of the word already shares in the joy of his Lord, which is depicted in the fifteenth chapter of Luke's Gospel, in the parables of the

lost sheep, the lost coin, the lost son. As is there said, it is the joy which lights up heaven with a new gladness, because a sinner has turned to God. The effort the preacher puts forth is trifling in comparison with the vastness of the result which is achieved. As our Lord told his apostles, he is but reaping where others have sown in most cases. The best environment of the man's life has been working toward grace. As George Herbert says:—

Lord, with what care hast thou begirt us round!
Parents first season us: then schoolmasters
Deliver us to laws; they send us bound
To rules of reason, holy messengers,

Pulpits and Sundays, sorrow dogging sin,
Afflictions sorted, anguish of all sizes,
Fine nets and stratagems to catch us in,
Bibles laid open, millions of surprises,

Blessings beforehand, ties of gratefulness,
The sound of glory ringing in our ears;
Without, our shame; within, our consciences;
Angels and grace, eternal hopes and fears.

All these have entered into the plan of the man's life, who at last is brought by the preached word to submit his will to God. And with all these has been the divine Sower, whose work underlies every good influence which touches any human life, whether effectually or not. Yet the

reaper, who gathers the harvest, is not the less blessed. "He that reapeth receiveth wages," the Lord tells his apostles, "and gathereth fruit unto life eternal; that he that soweth and he that reapeth may rejoice together." In his very first epistle the greatest of apostolic reapers tells how he thus rejoiced with his Lord. Paul writes to his Thessalonian converts: "For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of glorying? Are not even ye, before our Lord Jesus at his coming? For ye are our glory and our joy."

IV. Harvest is naturally and everywhere a time of rejoicing. The risks of tillage being beyond man's wisdom or strength to cope with, when these perils are past, men's hearts grow lighter. The Hebrew Feast of Tabernacles was their harvest festival, and the spirit which animated it finds fit expression in the Eighty-first Psalm. When Isaiah would describe the deep and hearty joy of the reign of the Prince of Peace, he says:—

> They joy before thee according to the joy of the harvest,
> And as men rejoice when they divide the spoil,

binding together two of the situations in which social joy overflows into festivity.

Who that was brought up on an old-fashioned farm, will ever forget the harvest-home? The

last handful of wheat was cut with care, bound with bright ribbons, and carried home by the reaper to grace the fireplace in the farm-kitchen. Then came the feast, at which master and men, with their households, ate at one huge table. After hunger and thirst were satisfied, there were cheerful talk of the season just passed, merry jesting about its incidents, singing of old ballads, and games for the younger folk. Honest joy and mirth drew all together, and if any were kept away by sickness, their share was sent them. Whenever I read that verse in the ninth chapter of Isaiah, it takes me back to the Ulster farm of my boyhood, and calls up the kind faces and warm hearts which gathered at its harvest-home.*

The spiritual life, like the life of the farm, is one which reaches its joys through its toils and even its anxieties. It is a steady transition from the sadder to the brighter side of things. "The evening and the morning were the first day;" and the shadows of the one passing into the brightness of the other have been present in every spiritual day since the first. As Lord Bacon says,

* Harvest-home is still kept in many parts of America, notably in New Jersey, where the farmers of a neighborhood unite in a common celebration. The grounds of the Presbyterian Church of Dayton, N. J., have been thus used for years past.

adversity is among the very promises of the New Testament. It tells us of tribulations in the world to be endured; of chastenings which seal us as the sons of God; of reproaches for the name of Christ; of sharing in his sufferings; of daily bearing of our cross. Our Lord allowed his disciples to cherish no delusions on this point, declaring that he sent them forth "as sheep in the midst of wolves," and warning them to expect at men's hands no better treatment than he himself received.

It is part of that intimate communion which Christians have with their Lord, that they should suffer in the presence of sin and shame as he did. We must taste of the bitter of his cup, as well as of the sweet, and learn why he was "a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief." The sight of the world's evil was a burden to him at all times; the vision of its shamefulness pierced his heart. They who are his desire to share his estimate of human life, and to "know the fellowship of his sufferings." Paul went farther than we can see our way, when he spoke of "filling up that which is lacking of the afflictions of Christ." The saying indicates the closeness of his sympathy with his Master.

This is one side of the Christian's experience, but the Scriptures always conjoin with it the joy

of the harvest. "Blessed are ye that weep now: for ye shall laugh." "Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted." "Ye shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy." These two notes, in this order, always run through the New Testament, as describing the blessedness of the saints. It is in exact harmony with them that the Christian's last experience in this world should be emergence through the shadow of death into the light of the life eternal.

The same alteration from sorrow to joy runs through the life given to the service of men. Our Lord went before his disciples in this experience also. He knew what it was to toil in vain for the spiritual elevation of those who heard him. He mourned over the blindness of the cities by the Galilæan lake, which saw his mighty works, but did not repent. He went over Jerusalem, saying, "If thou hadst known in this day, even thou, the things which belong unto peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes." To his countrymen at large he said: "Ye will not come to me that ye may have life." "Few there be that find" the way to life.

The success of our Lord's ministry, if measured by the number of the disciples he made, was far from remarkable. At the end of three years

he had but a handful, and not one of them stood by him in the dark hour. So has it been with many of his most spiritual servants. Henry Martyn toiled to small result among the Persians; Keith-Falconer sowed the good seed on stony ground among the Arabs; James Gilmour labored for a lifetime among the Mongols without a convert to show. Even those who have had marked success have had to endure the heartache of prolonged failure before it came, as Robert Moffatt did among the Bechuanas, feeling "as if he were trying to lift a mirror by taking hold of its face."

Where the sowing has been without the harvest during the life of the laborer, it yet may have a brighter and better result for the world in the long run. Dr. W. Robertson Niccoll suggests that there is a prophecy of the final success of missions, which have seemed to fail, in the words of the Twenty-second Psalm:—

> All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn unto Jehovah;
> And all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before thee.

The seed fell into the ground and seemed to die—in a sense did die—but it brought forth much fruit.

So, as our Lord predicted, it proved true of his

own work. He gave the world the best that could be given it, and it gave him the cross. Men wrote "Failure!" on that sealed tomb, and turned lightly to their affairs of ritual piety, or money-making, or politics. But he who had said, "Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, shall they give into your bosom," was not to receive less than he promised to those who heard him. The grandest powers of mankind have been used in his service—the eloquence of the orator, the speech-mastery of the poet, the meditation of the philosopher, the artistic skill of painter and sculptor and architect, the statesmanship of the ruler. All these are but the summit-peaks of a land ruled by his memory. Millions and hundreds of millions have lived for him, repressing the evil passions and brute instincts of their nature, laying aside their violent tempers, purging themselves of their impurity, rising above their covetousness, and toiling in honest ways for themselves and others. They have cut off the right hand and plucked out the right eye at his bidding, and carried their daily cross that they might follow him. Myriads have died for him, and in no century so many as in that whose close we have witnessed. More love him to-day than yesterday, and more will love him to-morrow than

to-day. His influence, unlike that of other great men, at once deepens and widens with every year since his death, showing it not to be subject to that law of limitation which binds all finite things. Of him especially may we say:—

"They that sow in tears shall reap in joy.
He that goeth forth weeping, bearing seed for sowing,
Shall doubtless come again with joy, bringing his sheaves."

VII
UPWARD

CHAPTER VII

UPWARD

Man's erect attitude is the mark of his dignity as the highest form of life on our planet. The lower vertebrates have their spines either parallel with the surface of the earth, or forming an acute angle with it. Man alone stands at right angles with its plane, as though to intimate that he alone must rise above it to live his true life. His is the attitude of aspiration.

In the human body the higher organs lie in the upper part of its structure. Normally we are more alive, sensitively, intellectually, and morally, in that quarter. It is only in an abnormal condition that our vital activity finds any lower center than the head and the heart. It is a decline toward the mere animal.

The law of gravitation makes it hard to rise and easy to sink. It is proverbially easy to "fall off a log." That in us which seeks to be master of circumstances, to overcome difficulties, and to assert our dignity as men, relishes a climb, just because it demands effort and persistence. The Alpine clubs, which attack every unscaled height.

and are turning to the Caucasus and the Himalayas after exhausting Switzerland, represent a profound instinct in our human nature. Their achievement in itself has small value, but the achieving brings exhilaration. On the other hand, a fall which passes the bounds of our control is a most unwelcome experience. Whoever has taken a great and involuntary plunge will never forget the horror of it, and probably will recall it as a nightmare in his sleep for years.

For these reasons, and perhaps others besides, the human race has come to treat motion upward and downward as symbols of moral advance or retrogression. Uprightness itself, apart from movement, it accepts as symbolic of manly integrity, while it describes the vile things of life as low, base, despicable; that is, fit to be looked down upon. And as forms of faith in the unseen seek there what is morally superior, man looks up for his gods, and not downward, the only exceptions being those which reign in the regions of the dead, as Pluto among the Greeks, the *dei inferni* of the Romans, and the *heli* of the Norse mythology.

These analogies have entered so deeply into our thought and speech that even when we come to recognize that upward and downward are

purely relative terms, and that what is upward to us is downward to our kindred in Australia, we continue to think and speak in the old groove, and to talk of heaven as above us, and of hell as beneath us, as did the Roman poet:—

> "Facilis descensus Averni,
> Sed revocare gradum, superasque evadere ad auras,
> Hoc opus, hic labor est."

This form of thought had much to do with the shaping of the religions of the world. At every point in their history we find men looking upward for an object of worship, but looking higher and yet higher as they toil after the unseen. These religions, indeed, may be defined as man's efforts to climb upward to God, while the gospel is the stooping of God to man.

I. A very early form of paganism looks up to and worships the tree. This is connected with the fact that the tree was the first home of man, throughout a large part of the world. Mr. Landor found tree-dwellers in the Philippines. The ordinary type of house in Burmah, and most of the islands southeast of Asia, is evidently a modification of that which was built in the branches of a tree, on a platform above the reach of wild beasts and wilder men. In the west we find that houses planted on the solid earth were,

in many instances, built around a tree. It was thus with the home of Ulysses in Ithaca. In the Volsunga Saga, the royal hall of the Volsung king is built around a great tree, into whose trunk Odin drives the sword, which is to be the property of the hero who can draw it out. This shows that even in the north the tree may have been the first home.

The tree thus inhabited was a sacred thing, and an object of worship as the protector of the home and its occupants. In some cases it fed and clothed them. It retained its sacred character, and was looked up to as something divine, even after the house had come to earth for its foundation. Two forms of this tree cult are found in the idolatry which the Hebrew people sometimes adopted from their neighbors. The "ashera" or "grove" was a row of wooden pillars (trees with the roots cut off, but their branches probably retained) which were planted beside the altars of the moon-goddess Astarte, "the Queen of heaven." Besides this, as the prophets tell us, they worshiped false gods "under every green tree." The sacred oak grove of Dordona is the monument of a similar worship in early Greece. Cæsar says that in his days the Germans had no temples, but worshiped their gods in sacred groves, and offered human sacrifices by hanging men on the trees of

the grove. Sacred trees played a great part in the Druidic worship of the British Islands, and survivals of this are found in sacred oaks and thorns, now under the protection of the fairies, who are said to send disaster upon any one who cuts down one of these trees.

II. The tree might perish by the lightning stroke, or by natural decay, and the heart craves an imperishable deity. The next objects of man's reverence were the "everlasting hills," as the loftiest and most unchanging features of the earth's surface. On their summits there reigned a peace and a silence which awed those who climbed them. There the air blew free and pure. They lifted up their protecting bulks between the valleys and the storms. They were the most ancient landmarks, which sundered tribe from tribe, and kept the peace between them. To the wanderer, they pointed out the location of his home, and they reminded him of the days of his childhood, when they had seemed an appendage to his father's house. Fusi-yama is thus invested with an especial sanctity in the eyes of the Japanese. It is reproduced in every garden, and introduced into every landscape. One of my Japanese students told me he could not restrain his tears when it came into sight, as he was returning for the first time from America.

Nor was this sacredness of the mountains obliterated when the conception of the gods as personal beings, existing in human form, displaced the early worship of natural facts and forces. In the summits of the mountains the gods made their home. Olympus, in Thessaly, close by the scene of the first union of the Hellenic tribes for a common defense, came to be regarded as the home of Zeus and the other deities of Greek worship. In the mountain gorge at Delphi was the shrine where Apollo gave out the oracles, which directed the whole movement of the Greek people, until the self-seeking of its priests undermined confidence in its utterances.

III. Higher still were the visible heavens, and the heavenly host—sun, moon, and stars. The worship of the sky itself had begun before the Aryan race broke up into its Asiatic and European branches. Dyaus-piter, Zeus-pater, Jupiter, in Sanscrit, Greek, and Latin, mean "Father-heaven;" and while the first holds a very subordinate place in the Indian Vedas, the second and third stand at the head of the deities of the west. The worship of heaven is one of the most solemn functions of the Emperor of China, whose highest title is "Son of Heaven." The calm and the purity of the firmament, its wondrous shapes of beauty and tints of color, its peace under most

conditions, and its scope as embracing all things, suggested divine honors for it.

The Semitic race, however, was drawn more to the worship of the heavenly bodies. Their existence in the silence of the great celestial spaces, the grand order of their movements, their beneficence as givers of light and heat, their control of the succession of the seasons, their freedom from decay, and the belief that their conjunction foretokened, if it did not procure, the fates of those who were born at that instant, all seemed to identify them with the Intelligence which controls the affairs of men. Tradition fixes upon the open plains of the Euphrates and Tigris Valley as the earliest home of astronomy and astrology; and the worship of the host of heaven would be a natural resort for those who had no mountain to look up to, especially if they had been removed by a sudden and forced emigration from their homes in the upland country, and from their ancient sanctuaries of tree and hill.

The Semitic mind, however, demands a personal god as the object of its worship, and through this demand we find Baal (or Moloch) the sun god, Astarte (or Ishtar) the moon god, and Chiun (Amos v: 26) the Saturn god, standing out as distinctly marked personalities, without any loss of their position in the sky. These gods,

made in the image of man, shared in his baser as well as his better instincts, and the latter were subordinated to the former. Their worship became an orgy such as Elijah witnessed on Mount Carmel, or an indulgence of sensual passions, or a sacrifice of human beings to propitiate their favor. Sabaism, or the worship of the host (*Tsabaoth*) of heaven, is the Semitic form of paganism, traceable from Uz in the south to Syria in the north, and from Assyria in the east to Carthage and Cadiz in the west. It was therefore the form of idolatry to which the Hebrews were especially tempted, both because of their mental affinity with those peoples, and through their proximity to the religious centers where this worship was practiced.

Their first contact with Sabaism occurred toward the close of their wanderings in the wilderness, when the Moabites and Midianites, apparently at the suggestion Balaam, enticed them to join in the worship of Baal-peor, through the unchaste orgies which characterized Semitic Sabaism. From this time to the captivity of Jerusalem by Nebuchadrezzar, a period of a thousand years (with the exception of the two centuries between Samuel and Ahab), we find this vile and cruel form of idolatry appearing and reappearing among the Hebrews. It won a great

victory through the marriage of Ahab with Jezebel, but reached its height during the apostasy of King Manasseh, when altars to Baal and Ashtaroth stood in the very courts of the temple, and the Valley Hinnom was profaned by human sacrifices. Jeremiah, its greatest enemy after Elijah, scourges it in his prophecies, declaring there were as many altars for it as there were streets in Jerusalem, and that the people had forgotten the name of God even in their oaths, and substituted that of Baal. Stephen reminds the Jews of this as the sink of idolatrous iniquity into which their fathers had sunk, quoting the prophet Amos. Yet Mosaic worship survived it, and it disappeared after the Exile. As Andrew Lang says, the unique thing in Hebrew history is that the people encountered every temptation which had degraded primitive faith into superstition in other peoples, and overcame these through the influence exerted by their inspired prophets.

The Scriptures discredit all attempts to find God through this looking upward to natural objects, whether tree or hill or sky. But just as they use freely the language which treats upward and downward as symbols of the noble and the vile, so they employ the cognate symbolism of nature in speaking of divine relations.

I. It is remarkable how prominent the tree is in the earliest chapters of the Mosaic record. Whether the tree of knowledge of good and evil, and the tree of life in the midst of Eden, are symbols or facts, they fit into the primitive mode of thought, but to correct its errors. The tree is not put forward as a sacred thing in itself, but as the instrument by which a divine Being higher than itself deals with men.

Throughout the early history of the elect people we hear nothing, indeed, of tree-worship, but of the constant selection of the tree as the background of home, and also of sacred acts. Abraham made his home under the oaks of Mamre, the Amorite, his friend as well as neighbor. Jacob hid the teraphim "under the oak which is in Shechem." The angel which called Gideon to judge Israel "came and sat under the oak which was in Ophrah," and after their interview "Gideon built an altar there unto Jehovah, and called it Jehovah-shalom." After his death, and the murder of all his legitimate sons but Jotham, "the men of Shechem . . . made Abimelech king, by the oak of the pillar that was in Shechem"—the same tree as was standing "by the sanctuary of Jehovah" in Shechem, when Joshua set up under it a great stone as a witness against all who departed from the words of God's law.

II. The prominence of the mountains and hills in the Bible cannot escape any attentive reader. The story, from Sinai to Olivet, from the giving of the law to the Ascension, may be said to run over the mountains of Palestine, with the exception of the seventy weary years of the Captivity on the mud-flats of the Tigris Valley. The last book of the Canon is placed on the island of Patmos, one of a group of mountains half sunk in the Ægean Sea; and for its last vision the apostle is carried "in the Spirit to a mountain great and high," that he may behold the holy city.

It seems to have been the divine purpose to take the mountains as the fitting background for the great scenes of sacred history. On Sinai (or Horeb), which rises about seven thousand three hundred and seventy-five feet above the Red Sea, the law was given; Elijah received the impressive lesson that divine power differs in kind from physical force; and Paul studied out the problems of law and gospel (Galatians i: 17; iv: 25). From Mounts Gerizim and Ebal, after the conquest, the blessings and the curses of the law were proclaimed to the Hebrew people. The tabernacle was set up by Joshua at Shiloh, on a hill which rises two thousand three hundred and thirty feet above the surrounding plain. After the capture of the ark by the Philistines,

the tabernacle seems to have been removed to Nob, a city of the priests, which overlooked Jerusalem (Isaiah x: 32) from the north. This was superseded when David brought the ark from Kiriath-jearim to Jerusalem, and Solomon built the temple on Mount Moriah, about two thousand five hundred and fifty feet above the sea level. Moriah and Zion were the twin mountains of the Holy City, the latter the home of the house of David, while the former was the place of the divine presence. They might be said to stand for church and state, and much is missed by a popular confusion of Mount Zion with the site of the temple.

The site of Jerusalem as a sanctuary among the hills and built upon the hills, was especially dear to the devout Hebrews. They were under no delusion as to its relative height. The difficult Sixty-eighth Psalm contrasts Jerusalem with the loftier heights of Hermon and Bashan, and says:

Why look ye askance, ye high mountains,
At the mountain which God hath desired for his abode?

In their eyes it was "the mountain of the Lord;" "the mountain of the Lord's house;" "the holy hill" of Jehovah, where they were called to worship his holiness, and a symbol of his protection of his people:—

I will lift up mine eyes unto the mountains:
From whence shall my help come?
My help cometh from Jehovah,
Who made heaven and earth.

They that trust in Jehovah are as mount Zion,
Which cannot be moved, but abideth for ever.
As the mountains are round about Jerusalem,
So Jehovah is round about his people.

It is a recent discovery of the Egyptian Exploration Society that the Tel-el-Yehudiyeh, or "Mound of the Jews," in Egypt, is the ruin of the Jewish temple erected by Onias, son of the high priest Onias III., about 160 B. C., with permission of King Ptolemy VI.; and that it was mounted on an artificial hill, raised by human labor some sixty-eight feet above the flat land of the delta, and secured by a wall of brick some twenty feet thick. It reproduced the temple at Jerusalem on a scale of one half the size. The Jews in Egypt seem to have felt that it would be no house of God, unless they could say, "Let us go up to it."

In the New Testament, there is the same choice of the mountains as the fitting scene of great events. Our Lord preaches the great Sermon of the Foundations on a mountain side, coming down to meet the multitude, which came up to hear him. In that, he compares his church to a city set on a hill, which cannot be hid, just as

Jerusalem was. He was transfigured before the three disciples on an unnamed mountain, meeting the great representatives of law and prophecy, whose story is bound up with the mountains. When he spent the night in prayer to his Father, he "went out into the mountain" for that purpose, and when he was crucified it was on Mount Calvary, the

> . . . . green hill far away
> Without the city wall,

of Mrs. Alexander's hymn. After the Resurrection, "the eleven disciples went into Galilee, unto the mountain where Jesus had appointed them," and met him there. "From the mount called Olivet, which is nigh unto Jerusalem," he ascended to his Father, and passed from the region of sense to that of faith.

Yet while our Lord made use of the mountains as the fitting scene of great transactions, and employs the associations which they offer, he warns us that this is relative and even temporary. The woman of Samaria, who stood in sight of Mount Gerizim and was jealous for its honor, said, "Our fathers worshiped in this mountain; and ye say, that [on Mount Moriah] in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship." Jesus answered, "Believe me, the hour cometh, when neither in this

mountain, nor in Jerusalem, shall ye worship the Father . . . The hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshiper shall worship the Father [who is a Spirit], in spirit and truth." This was the great proclamation of the spirituality of the presence and service of God. Local associations and backgrounds have their use, but they are not finalities, and shall cease when men get beyond the need of them.

III. Sometimes the Scriptures seem to speak of the visible heavens as the home of God, but always with rejection of the notion that they are worthy of our worship. Especially, they put him forward as the creator of heaven and of earth, in a way unknown to any other ancient literature, and subordinate the heavenly bodies to him as their maker and master. He is Jehovah of hosts, never one of that host. He has given to sun and moon their place in the heavens, and they are the witnesses of his greatness and his wisdom. His throne is in the heavens, and from heaven looks down upon the children of men. By this localization, men are enabled more easily to feel his personality, and to recognize his rule.

On the other hand, we find along with these statements others which correct their imperfection as expressions of God's greatness. "The heaven of heavens cannot contain thee," says

Solomon in the prayer at the dedication of the temple. The Psalmist says:—

> Whither shall I go from thy Spirit?
> Or whither shall I flee from thy presence?
> If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there:
> If I make my bed in Sheol, behold, thou art there.
> If I take the wings of the morning,
> And dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea;
> Even there shall thy hand lead me,
> And thy right hand shall hold me.

The greatness of God in comparison with the littleness of the creature, as it is stated in the fortieth chapter of Isaiah, is one of the sublimest themes of Hebrew poetry, and the heavens are expressly included in the list of the things which are dealt with after his pleasure.

The New Testament uses the same language, for the most part, as the Old in this regard. Men are forbidden to "swear by heaven, for it is God's throne." They are bidden to pray to "Our Father in the heavens," to distinguish him from human fathers upon the earth. The Son of man "came down from heaven;" he "beheld Satan fallen as lightning from heaven;" he will come to judgment "on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory;" he is "the high priest, that hath passed into the heavens." Heaven and earth shall pass away, to be replaced by a new heaven

and a new earth. How are we to understand these expressions? Not of the visible sky, which we know to be a mere appearance of a celestial roof, produced by the water suspended in our atmosphere. Many understand them to mean that there is, at some distance not ascertained, but above us and beyond the range of our sight, a place which is the especial center or focus of God's presence, and to which he will welcome his people after death. They believe that if one left this earth and proceeded for the right distance and in the right direction, he would find heaven, just as if he went in the direction of the star Alpha Centauri the twenty billions of miles which measure its distance from us, he would reach that star.

When this belief is stated distinctly it arouses in us a certain repugnance, which is not removed by any qualifications as to the omnipresence of God. We feel that we have lost something by putting heaven to an immense distance from earth, and bringing all intercourse between them to a form of celestial telegraphy at an inconceivable distance. Nor does it correspond to much that is said in the New Testament about the relations of the two. We are told by Peter that "the heaven must receive" our Lord "until the times of [the] restoration of all things;" but the same

apostle had heard our Lord say, "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them."

There is a series of passages in the New Testament which seem to bring heaven near to our human life, and to exclude the idea of its immense distance from us. At our Lord's baptism "the heavens were opened to him," or "rent asunder," and "a voice came out of the heavens," which was the voice of the Father declaring his delight in his Son. We find that the same voice "out of the bright cloud" bore the same testimony at the Transfiguration; and that it came a third time as Jesus taught in the temple—"a voice out of heaven" to declare before Gentile and Jew that the Father's will was in perfect accord with that of the Son (John xii: 27-32). We learn that at Pentecost the "sound as of the rushing of a mighty wind" came from heaven; that Stephen in sight of the martyr's death was permitted to see in heaven, and beheld his Lord "standing on the right hand of God;" and that Saul's conversion at the gates of Damascus was through "a light from heaven, above the brightness of the sun," and the voice which won him to obedience and commissioned him for his work. And John in Patmos, after receiving the messages to the seven churches, saw,

and beheld a door open in heaven, wherein a throne was set, and One sitting upon the throne.

These are the passages which come the nearest to disclosing to us the relation of heaven to earth, and its influence upon the lives of men. None of them suggest that our inability to behold the content of heaven is due to its vast distance from us, and not to our spiritual imperfection. They seem to teach that heaven is shut to us because we are not yet fit for the vision of its spiritual realities, and will be "opened" to us when we attain to that which the Master promised to Nathanael and Philip: "Ye shall see the heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man"—the true Jacob's ladder, which binds heaven and earth.

An opposite error to that which removes heaven to an immense distance, is that which makes it to exist only in the human spirit, as a personal experience. This notion has been very common among the Mystics. Thus Johann Scheffler writes:—

How far is it to heaven? Not very far, my friend;
A single hearty step will all thy journey end.

Hold there! where runnest thou? Know heaven is in thee;
Seekest thou for God elsewhere, his face thou'lt never see.

The same view also commends itself to rationalists. "Are we still, like children," says Orville

Dewey, "fancying that heaven is a beautiful city, into which one needs only the powers of locomotion to enter? Do we not know that heaven is in the mind; in the greatness and elevation and purity of our immortal nature?" Heaven is a thing more real and objective than is any state of the human spirit, and lies without us as well as within us. So we are taught by the disclosures of the New Testament about it. It was not a state of the spirit which was opened to our Lord at his baptism, or to Stephen in his death hour, or to Paul in his conversion. In the last case especially we see the inadequacy of this subjective notion of heaven. The persecutor's inner state was not in harmony with the light and the voice from heaven, but was to be made such through them.

I find the view I have tried to present in the writing of some of our Christian poets, while in most of our hymns the more material conception of a distant region beyond the skies is dominant. Mr. T. D. Bernard writes:—

Not in some distant world unknown,
  Not in the lofty skies,
Not o'er the ocean vast and lone,
  God's kingdom lies.

As near its unseen presence comes
  As air that circles round;
Along our paths and in our homes
  Its voices sound.

Mrs. A. T. D. Whitney writes of the angels of the children:—

The world is troublous, and hard and cold,
And men and women grow gray and old;
But behind the world is an inner place,
Where yet their angels behold God's face.

Susan Coolidge (Miss Woolsey) asks as to the soul leaving the body:—

Does it travel wide? Does it travel far,
To find the place where all spirits are?
Does it measure long leagues from star to star?

With a rapture of sudden consciousness,
I think it awakes to a knowledge of this—
That heaven earth's closest neighbor is.

That 'tis but a step from dark to day,
From the worn-out tent and the burial clay,
To the rapture of youth renewed for aye.

And that just where the soul, perplexed and awed,
Begins its journey, it meets the Lord,
And finds that heaven, and the great reward
Lay just outside its prison!

Samuel Longfellow dwells on a natural analogy:—

The sea is but another sky,
The sky a sea as well;
And which is earth, and which the heavens,
The eye can scarcely tell.

So when for us life's evening hour,
Soft passing, shall descend,
May glory born of earth and heaven
The earth and heavens blend.

Flooded with peace the spirit float,
With silent rapture glow,
Till where earth ends and heaven begins
The soul shall scarcely know.

Harriet Beecher Stowe feels the nearness of heaven in her sense of her nearness to those who have left her by death:—

It lies about us like a cloud—
A world we do not see;
Yet the sweet closing of an eye
May bring us there to be.

Its gentle breezes fan our cheek;
Amid our worldly cares
Its gentle voices whisper love
And mingle with our prayers.

Sweet hearts around us throb and beat,
Sweet helping hands are stirred,
And palpitates the veil between
With breathings almost heard.

The silence, awful, sweet, and calm,
They have no power to break;
For mortal words are not for them
To utter or partake.

If the conception of heaven as a part of space, and that of heaven as a state of the spirit, be both

of them inadequate and misleading, what is the central thought as to its nature which will avoid these faults? It is that of heaven as a fellowship or society, which unites God and his sinless or redeemed creatures. It is our Father's house because the Father is there. It is the Saviour's purpose, "That where I am, ye may be also," which foretells its blessedness to his people. Heaven is the full realization of that "fellowship with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ," which John sets forth as the inmost life of the church of Christ. It is the central spiritual fact of the whole spiritual universe, which knows no distance from any man's spirit except that which he makes by sin, and which even breaks through the bounds sin has set, to seek and find the lost.

This fellowship we cannot but think as in space, that being the "form of thought" into which we put all our pictures of what is outside our minds. Heaven must be something vague and indefinite to us, unless we think of it as being as concrete and placed, as was the home we were born into. Yet we must guard against a localization, which shuts God out of immediate relation to all existences. We call this relation his omnipresence, but the word is not a happy one, and does not correspond to scriptural usage. Rather than conceive of God as present everywhere, and thus diffused like a

vapor through all space, we should think of all things as present to him, Coleridge says. Thus we escape a tendency which may land us in pantheism.

Heaven on man's side, is the loyal and loving realization of the fellowship to which God invites all his rational creatures. His will is our peace; his service our liberty; his presence our heaven.

"Thou art the source and center of all minds,
Their only point of rest, Eternal Word!
From thee departing, they are lost, and rove
At random, without honor, hope, or peace.
From thee is all that soothes the life of man,
His high endeavor and his glad success,
His strength to suffer and his will to serve."

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